

ETHICS OF THE GREAT^{M.} RELIGIONS

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF THEIR
ORIGINS, SCRIPTURES, & PRACTICES

By
E. ROYSTON PIKE

No religion can take root which does not adapt itself to,
and answer some need of, the heart of man. Hence
the importance of study of the history of all religions.

—EDWARD CLODD

*Illustrated by Art Plates in Colour and
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by*

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CHAPTER I

ETHICS AND RELIGION

HALF a million—or was it a million?—years ago man first became man.

The stage on which the first act of the human drama was played is as uncertain as its date. Possibly the curtain was rung up in more than one place. Or perhaps those are right who draw a picture of arboreal apes in Central Asia caught in a cosmic convulsion, fleeing in terror as the Himalayan giants were thrust up to meet the sky: apes, fleeing in terror, yet equipped with a germ of adaptiveness that enabled them to survive even the profoundest changes in climate and habitat. But, whenever or wherever it was, we know that humanity had its beginnings in non-human, in simian stock.

That first step, the descent from the trees to a hard and uncomfortable earth, was a supreme moment in the history of the world, to be eclipsed in importance only by the day on which the descendants of the chattering, shivering, tree-climbing, and earth-scurrying simians explode the globe with the latest and biggest and last of atomic bombs. We know nothing of the creatures who made the venture, nor do we know very much of the generations and generations of sub-men who followed in procession through the gloomy forests in the primeval night. Even of the men of the Old Stone Age, men who were fully *Homo sapiens*, whose blood runs in our own veins, we have nothing more than the dull-looking stone implements, the tools of flint, in the glass cases of the local museum.

• We know next to nothing of their life. We cannot expect to know anything of what went on inside their massive craniums. For all we are aware, these most ancient ancestors of ours may have had visions and dreamed dreams. They may have grunted the Stone Age equivalent of "how?" as they handled a usefully-shaped stone, or "why?" when one of their number was felled to the ground by a falling branch or swept away like a straw by a river in sudden flood. When such mischances happened, had they some glimmering of a belief in powers outside themselves who were malevolently disposed towards them and worked them ill? From this it would not have been a very big step to the conception that

these mysterious agencies might possibly be persuaded to drop their hostility—further and better still, might be induced to join with men in their activities and bring them not evil but great good. In caves that for ages were the commodious residences of a race of hunter-artists there have been found wall-paintings of the chase which, it has been suggested, were executed with a magical purpose. There are even representations of men who may have been the magicians of the tribe.

Magic lies somewhere near the threshold of religion, but these Magdalenian painters were the successors of unnumbered and numberless generations who have left not a trace behind. If we cast our minds back to the hairy brute, sitting at the mouth of the den that is his home and crunching a bone with his mighty molars, or fondling his shaggy mate in the light of the moon, we shall have no little difficulty in imagining him to have risen to the level of magic, still less to have had the beginnings of a religious sense.

But if he had no idea of sprites and spirits, of gods or demons; if he had no creed, no ritual, not the slightest idea of a life beyond the present—if he had not what E. B. Tylor put forward as a “minimum definition of religion, the belief in spiritual beings”—yet we may be sure that he had the rudiments of morality.

For morals have to do with man's behaviour; and moral rules, ethical codes, must have been a necessity when men lived together in units larger than the family—in groups and clans and tribes.

In every savage community there are things that are done and things that are not done. Just as among us it is “not the thing” to eat peas with one's knife, tell tales out of school, bilk a taxi-driver, or run off with a neighbour's wife, so all the savage peoples known to us have their working rules, their little systems of correct behaviour. So it must have been with the most savage of all the savages, the most primitive of humankind, the generations who lived when man was not far removed in his condition, however distant in time, from his sub-human ancestors.

Morals in Prehistory. Not a vestige has remained of those earliest codes, but we may venture a guess at some of the things with which they had to deal. Thus we may be sure that one of the qualities they inculcated was loyalty, what might be described as stick-togetherness, for unless the members of the group did stick together they could not long survive. The never-ending search for food, the frequent struggle with predatory beasts, the rivalry of other groups, the everlasting warfare with an unkind and altogether uncaring

and pitiless Nature—these dictated loyalty unquestioning and unquestioned. Without it those primitive humans would have died. Many, it goes without saying, did die and left not a bone behind. But what we call the herd instinct, the spirit of the clan, which was originally an inheritance from those creatures who were not yet men, and is paralleled in animal societies known to us, sufficed to carry the race through those critical first hundreds of millenniums.

Then there were two other things which still to-day are the principal concern of morals—Property and Sex.

It may seem altogether out of place to talk of property in connection with those naked and houseless wanderers, who subsisted on berries and nuts, supplemented perhaps by the flesh of some beast found dead in a forest glade. But it is highly probable that they, like the food-gathering tribes of modern times, had their special territories, into whose bounds interlopers penetrated only at their peril. Like them they may have had their special stores of honey, their favourite caves and haunts in the boundless wild. With the coming of the Neolithic Age the kinds and quantity of property were greatly increased.

Then as to sex, there may have been, in the earliest age, sexual promiscuity and forms of group marriage such as some anthropologists have supposed; but it seems reasonable to believe that next to his flint axe the prehistoric man's most valuable and exclusive possession was his woman.

If these things formed the substance of all the primeval moral codes, each family, each tribe, each community, must have worked out its own principles by the time-honoured method of trial and error. We have no idea of the things that were done in that inconceivably remote and so vastly different age. There were dreadful experiments, awful essays in living that ended in sudden death. Shocking crimes were perpetrated before men realized they were crimes. Just as the ogre of the nursery-tale had his original in the fearsome brute that was Neanderthal Man, so the legend of Oedipus may have originated in an adventurous human mating that was found to turn out badly. Primitive man, wrote Walter Bagehot, could never have known what to expect. No doubt; and life must have held some hideous surprises. Through blunders and bunglings men learnt at last the A B C of practical ethics.

Ethics among the Savages. Some idea of the contents and scope of the primitive codes may be gained from a study of what passes for

morality among the most primitive and unsophisticated of the world's surviving races—the Australian aborigines, for example, the Andaman islanders, the Bushmen of South Africa, the Pygmies of the Equatorial forests, the Fuegians, and so on. All of these live in little groups, generally under the leadership of a powerful male. There are families among them, and complete promiscuity is rare. Parental love is a commonplace, and conjugal love is not altogether absent. The sense of property is developed to the extent that trespassers will be prosecuted. Personal belongings are recognized as being personal.

There is, or has been up to quite recent times, infanticide dictated by the impossibility of feeding more than a very limited number of mouths. Looked at in this way, it is almost a moral act; and so, too, is the exposure of the old and hopelessly feeble to die in solitude. Murder is not uncommon, but it is never permitted to go without punishment at the hands of the victim's relatives or members of his social group. Cannibalism is by no means so universal as has been sometimes supposed, and when it occurs it is indulged in usually as a religious performance. Then among savages there is no slavery, no war (unless we apply the word to tribal forays that are usually short and seldom bloody), no human sacrifice to blood-thirsty gods, no large-scale polyandry or polygamy, no prostitution. And as a rule—although in this respect the Australian aborigines constitute an exception—the women are not too degraded, too ill-treated, too despised and stricken of men.

Judged by his own standards the savage is often a good man, exhibiting all the virtues that make for a reasonably happy and healthy life in a far from congenial world. Just so were his remotest ancestors—his and ours. They did well according to their lights. *Why* they did right is an interesting question. We may rule out the supposition that it was because of fear of the gods or of spirits and bogeys of one kind or another. Not in that stage of culture, not in those long-ago ages, was the fear of God the beginning of wisdom. Much more probably was it the compelling necessity of doing what the society required that made for righteousness—the obligation to perform those things that “public opinion” demanded, and to refrain from performing those other things that public opinion condemned. This was the sanction; and the nonconformist, the objector, the rebel, the man who wanted his own way and thought he knew better than the rest, was speedily ejected and left to repent his folly in dangerous solitude.

The Coming of Religion. So men lived for ages and ages. And still there was no religion. Spirits were no more than phantoms flitting uneasily in some men's brains. The gods had not had their birth day.

When they were conceived by man's fertile fancy it is impossible to say, since it was before history began, ages before the art of writing had been discovered. Whenever and however it was, the time came when it was no longer sufficient for men to consider only the wishes and wants of their own people. The idea was born of "powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of Nature and of human life," and these powers must be propitiated or conciliated. Such is religion as Sir J. G. Frazer defines it.

Sometimes religion supported morality. The rules that had been so carefully worked out were fortified with the divine authority. Sometimes religion and morality were at variance, as when—we must of course take a comparatively recent example, since the early ages have left no history—human sacrifices were thrust into Moloch's fiery belly, or when devout Hindu wives were burnt alive on the funeral pyres of their husbands, and devout Hindu men practised the horrible craft of thuggery.

Very often morals were ahead of religion. Men change their religions more slowly than they change anything else, is another of Bagehot's sayings; and so we have ages in which, save among the villagers and the vulgar, the generally approved religion was the butt of the wits and the scorn of the moralists who were also the philosophers. The most obvious example of this divorce of the religion of the State and the highest level of conduct is afforded by the classical world of Greece and Rome.

Most people will be prepared to admit this lagging behind so far as the religion of other people, and particularly of other races, is concerned; *their* religion improves on Matthew Arnold's famous definition—it is indeed the highest morality touched with the purest emotion. Unfortunately, as W. K. Clifford went on to explain in his essay on "The Ethics of Religion," "we do not mean your religion alone, but all manner of heresies and heathenisms along with it: the religions of the Thug, of the Jesuit, of the South Sea cannibal, of Confucius, of the poor Indian with his untutored mind, of the Peculiar People, of the Mormons, and of the old cat-worshipping Egyptian." Religious facts include not only morality touched with emotion, but immorality touched with emotion. Fortunately the ancients proved that "man could still be holy, although every God was vile. . . . The wicked stories of theologians

were somehow explained away and disregarded. If men were no better than their religions, the world would be a hell indeed."

Religion Lends its Aid. But we are outstripping our theme. In the beginning, religion was a powerful ally of morality, as may be seen in the famous Code of Hammurabi. Religion was the inspiration of the morality of the Egyptian who was made into a mummy in the sure and certain hope of a resurrection through the power and love of Osiris. Religion guided the dictates of Moses and the lofty eloquence of the Hebrew prophets. Religion supported the ancient philosophers, most of whom believed in a Spirit directing, or more usually containing, the universe.

In the Orient, religion and morality were not so closely connected; indeed, they have been frequently opposed, or at least allowed to develop along separate lines. In Hinduism, that most ancient of still surviving faiths, it is not the will of God that decides whether a man shall be reborn in bird or beast or human, or sent for a spell to heaven or to hell. Ethics and not theology is the determining factor.

So, too, in Buddhism the religious element is so unobtrusive that the many hundreds of millions of Buddhists have been described as atheists. Belief in *karma*—in the sum total of a man's deeds, both good and bad, that in some strange way is handed on from generation to generation—would seem to be altogether independent of belief in some overriding Power.

Then in China we have another variation in the relationship. A third, not of the Chinese people, but of the Chinese individual, is Confucian, i.e. this part of the Chinese make-up professes and practises a religion in which there are no gods, although there is a belief in some form of extra-mundane life—else how may be explained the little shrines dedicated to the ancestors?—and in some spirit shapes. But for the rest Confucianism is morality afforded the status of a religion.

Taoism is more religion than morals, and more magic than religion. It is to Buddhism (of a sort) that the Chinese turn when they experience something in the nature of a religious craving.

We are left with the two great world religions which are still making converts and are therefore rivals in the mission field. Mohammedanism is morality plus belief in Allah and Mohammed the Prophet of Allah. Christianity is held by Christians to be the highest expression of the moral idea that has been given so far to the world—nay, the highest that will ever or can ever be given,

since he who delivered the Sermon on the Mount, who spoke the Golden Rule and the Parables, who lived a life of incomparable beauty and goodness, was the Son of God.

For fifteen hundred years after the dawn of Christianity, what was said by priest or parson, presbyter or minister, on matters of social life and individual conduct was accepted by the great mass of men with unquestioning trust and submissiveness. Those who violated the moral code proclaimed from the pulpit did so at their peril, rendering themselves liable for penalties ranging from social ostracism to the cruellest death at the stake. But in the eighteenth century, and still more in the nineteenth, the domination by the Church of the sphere of morals was challenged. Voltaire opened the campaign. Herbert Spencer, Darwin, and T. H. Huxley agreed with Lord Morley in discerning "the peril of having morality made an appendage of a set of theological mysteries."

The ground lost by theology has never been regained. In present-day Britain, as in many other parts of the world where similar intellectual processes have been at work, men do right because it is the thing to do and is expected of them by their fellows, or because if they do differently they will be found out and punished by the law or incur a social stigma, or because they have learnt by experience that it "pays," or because they expect to be rewarded in some way or another. Only very seldom and to a very limited extent are men influenced nowadays by the prospect of hell fire: what made our ancestors sweat and tremble and break out into frenzied ejaculations is now hardly capable of raising an incredulous smile.

In our conception of Right, too, there have been great changes. It is no longer held to be what the Church lays down or the Bible enjoins. It is much more certainly the line of conduct that the laws and public opinion make advisable; and if a definition be demanded, then Right consists of those things and actions that make for Welfare, this in turn being defined as anything and everything that makes for the fullest and freest development of the human personality, having regard to the equal development of the personalities of others. In an age that has probably seen more misery than any other period in the long history of mankind, it is pathetically true that, more generally and more widely than ever before, it is recognized that men and women have a right to be happy and that happiness is the most desirable of goods.

Such, then, is the state of morality at the end of untold thousands

of years. Has there been progress? Some would deny it. Morals, they assert, are static, not dynamic. Buckle, for instance, made great play with the stationary aspect of moral truths compared with the progressive aspect of intellectual truths. Nothing in the world, he said, has undergone so little change as those great dogmas of which moral systems are composed. To do good to others: to sacrifice for their benefit your own wishes: to love your neighbour as yourself: to forgive your enemies: to restrain your passions: to honour your parents: to respect those who are set over you: these and a few others are the sole essentials of morals, and in all the thousands of years they have been known not one jot or one tittle has been added to them by all the sermons, homilies, and textbooks which moralists and theologians have been able to produce.

How far Buckle was justified in his contention will perhaps be shown in the pages that follow.

Living as we do in the century of world wars with all their attendant horrors, a pessimistic view might perhaps be excused. But it can hardly be justified, at least on the time-scale that history demands. Man has been man possibly half a million years: if he can avoid committing an act of global suicide his future may be counted not in hundreds of thousands but in millions of years.

And even since Buckle wrote, the belief in the possibilities of moral progress has been powerfully reinforced. As Lord Samuel has expressed it, there is one difference between our times and all the times, remote or near, that have gone before. For the first time there is a race of beings on this planet which is aware of at least part of the cosmic process. There has always been Evolution, but henceforth there may be Conscious Evolution. Whether or not a new race of men may be evolved, as civilized man has come out of simian man, and simian man from the lower animals, "it may at least be possible, under the influence of wise ethical ideas, to reach, within a time not too distant, a state of society far better than that about us—in which there shall be dignity, as well as activity, in private life, simplicity in manners, beauty in environment, majesty in the State and tranquillity in the world."¹

¹ *Practical Ethics* (Home University Library), p. 215.

CHAPTER II

EGYPT

IN the earliest days of settled life in the Nile valley Egypt was ruled over by a dynasty of gods. So at least the ancient Egyptians themselves believed. The tradition goes on to declare that the gods, after reigning nearly fourteen thousand years, were followed by a number of demi-gods whose reigns covered another eleven thousand years. Then at last began the human kings, of whom Menes was the first.

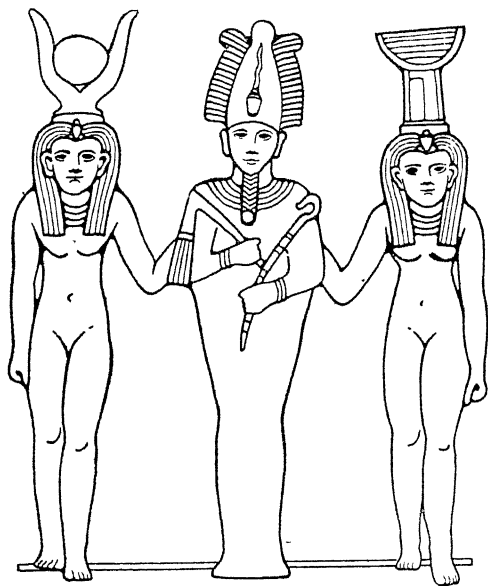
Historians look askance at the gods and demi-gods, although the spades of the archæologists have turned up abundant evidences of Egyptian civilizations long before the dawn of history. For at least ten thousand years men have dwelt in the land of Egypt, but in the absence of written records it is impossible to establish a chronology. Menes is considered to have been an historical figure, but *when* he lived and reigned is a matter in dispute. One authority places this, the starting-point of Egyptian history, at about 5500 B.C.; another maintains that 3400 B.C. is much more likely.

Menes founded the first dynasty. There were thirty dynasties before Alexander the Great conquered Egypt in 332 B.C. On Alexander's death, Ptolemy, one of his generals, made himself king of Egypt, and his descendants ruled until 30 B.C., when Cleopatra, the last of the line, killed herself rather than grace the Roman triumph, whereupon her country became the private property of the emperors. • From that day until A.D. 1922 Egypt was never again independent.

In prehistoric times Egyptian religion seems to have been a kind of fetishism, not unlike that of the Negro races, from which, indeed, there is good reason to believe it originally proceeded. The gods were innumerable. There were gods of the earth, there were gods of the sky. There were gods who were thought of as manifesting themselves in the world as "theophanies," their living images on earth, as animals of one kind or another. Some of these had animal heads on human bodies. There were solar gods. Even in very early times the sun, the moon, and the stars were believed to be divinities watching over the fate of the earth and its

peoples. There were gods, too, of the underworld, of the abyss.

The centuries rolled on, and still the number of the gods, brought into being by local pride and priestly craft, grew and grew, until to the more orderly-minded of the Egyptians the situation became unmanageable and inconvenient. So occasionally there were attempts to bring some sort of order out of the theological chaos, this luxuriant polytheism. Some success was achieved in identifying minor divinities with great and popular

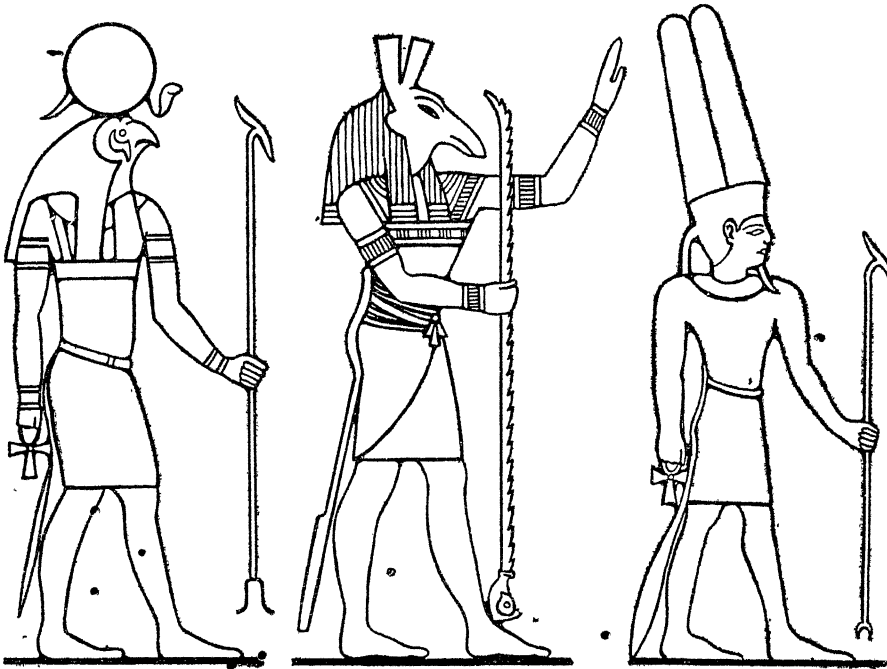


The Osirian Triad: Isis, Osiris, and Nephthys

ones, treating them as being the same god in different forms or characters. Very early, too, may be seen the establishment of triads, the uniting of several local gods into a family of father, mother, and child; for example, at Memphis there was the triad of Ptah (the potter or opener, who with his hammer opened the egg-shaped world in the beginning), Sekhmet (the lion-headed goddess), and their son Imhotep, the god of the physicians. At Thebes there was the triad of Amen-ra, Mut, and Khons. Most famous of all was the Osirian triad at Abydos, composed of Osiris, his sister and wife Isis, and either their son Horus or Nephthys, sister of Isis.

At Heliopolis there was a further elaboration. Not a triad but an ennead, three-times-three or nine gods, formed the objects of adoration.

Such attempts are an indication of the Egyptians' concern with their complicated pantheon. But the ancient Egyptian was a conservative of conservatives; and to the end his religion was, in the words of Professor A. H. Sayce, a loosely-connected agglomeration of beliefs and practices which had come down from the past and one after the other had found a place in the religion of the State. The past was always present, since the climate preserved objects and monuments which would have perished in other countries. Nothing perished indeed except by the hand of man: nothing, not even the gods. New gods were discovered or invented, local gods were given a place in the national pantheon. But there



Rā, the Sun God

Set

Amen-Ra

was no question of the old making place for the newcomers. The Egyptian thought, in his easy-going way, that there was plenty of room for all. The names of 2,200 divinities are known to us, and no doubt there were many more.

Akhnaton. Once and only once was a religious revolution attempted. This was under the eighteenth dynasty, about 1375 B.C.,

when Amenhotep IV thrust aside all the gods but one, and proclaimed that one, Aton-ra, to be the Supreme Being, the only god of the Egyptian state. Aton (or Aten) means "the disc of the sun," and the sun's rays became the symbol of the new deity. But the young king, who may have been inspired by his mother, who was an Asiatic princess, did not have it all his own way. The priests of the other gods, in particular those of Amen-ra of Thebes, put up a stern fight, and the innovating pharaoh was roundly denounced as a heretic. Whereupon in retaliation the worship of Amen was proscribed, and a shrine of the rival deity was erected



Queen Nefertiti

at the very gate of Amen's temple. The king changed his name from Amenhotep ("Amen is content") to Akhenaten or Akhnaton ("Pious to Aton"); and with his serenely beautiful consort Nefertiti, who may have been his sister, he established his court in the new city of Akhetaton ("Horizon of Aton," now Tell el-Amarna), which he built as the metropolis of Atonism.

But in 1358 B.C. Akhnaton died after a reign of only sixteen years, and under his successor, Tutankhamen, the old cheerful polytheism, which the general run of the people had never abandoned, was fully restored. The magnificent buildings that Akhnaton had built in his model city were dismantled and utilized as stone quarries; and his name, the names of his family, and of the god whom he had adored, were chiselled out of the monuments. In subsequent centuries this first of the monotheists was referred to

by the Egyptian scribes as "the criminal of Akhetaton." There are some literary survivals of this most interesting phase of Egyptian religion in the form of hymns addressed to the Aton. These are lofty in their expression of the monotheistic idea, but they tell us nothing of the ethics of the people who composed and used them.

Worship of Osiris. Not all the gods were worshipped by all the Egyptians. Only some of them can have been known even by name throughout the length and breadth of the land; the gods of lower Egypt were not the gods of the upper valley, the deities of Heliopolis were not the deities of Memphis. All the same, the Egyptians were credulous enough to believe in the existence of any and every god that they ever came to hear of. Their pantheon always had plenty of vacant rooms for the accommodation of newcomers. There was, however, one deity known to everybody and worshipped by everybody—Osiris, the god of the dead and of the underworld. In very early times this local god of Abydos rose to a position of unrivalled eminence above the rest of the divine congregation. With him there were associated, as we have seen, a female partner and a child, Isis and Horus.

According to the ancient legend, Osiris was the fruit of an intrigue between Seb, the earth-god, and Nut, the sky goddess. Ascending the throne of Egypt in that remote period when the pharaohs were recruited from among the gods, he ruled his people with benevolence and wisdom. He gave them laws. He taught them to worship. He induced them to abandon cannibalism. He showed them how to make wine from grapes. In a word, he converted them from savages into civilized men.

Osiris married Isis, who was his sister—the marriage of brother and sister was a frequent occurrence among the gods and pharaohs (who were held to be gods) of ancient Egypt—and she, too, played a part in the civilizing process, for she it was who taught the Egyptians how to cultivate wheat and barley which she had discovered growing wild.

The time came when Osiris set out from his Egyptian kingdom to convert the rest of the world to the arts of peace, and during his absence Isis ruled in his place. After many and long wanderings he returned to Egypt, and was at once worshipped as a deity. But his brother Set (Tryphon, the Greeks called him) was jealous of his fame and achievements, and at the head of seventy-two conspirators plotted his downfall. By a trick Set managed to imprison

the god-king in a coffer which, nailed down and sealed, was flung into the Nile.

When Isis heard of it she put on mourning garb, cut her hair, and wandered up and down amid the swamps of the Delta, seeking the body of her murdered consort. There at Buto she gave birth to a son, the younger Horus (Harpocrates), whom the local divinities hid from the servants of the wicked Set.

Meanwhile the coffer containing the body of Osiris floated away into the Mediterranean and came to shore at last at Byblus,



Isis suckling Horus

on the coast of Syria. Here it was miraculously embedded in a fine tree trunk which was shortly made into a pillar of the king's house. Isis came to hear of this, journeyed to Byblus, and at once located the pillar in which Osiris was imprisoned. She begged that it should be given her; and then, cutting it open, recovered the fatal coffer. This she wrapped in fine linen, anointed it with oil, and took it back to Egypt.

Arrived in the Delta, the goddess buried the coffer in the mud and went to see her boy. While she was away the wicked Set,

out on a hunting expedition, came across the chest by the merest chance. Opening it, he recognized the body it contained; and to make sure that this time there should be no possibility of recovery, sliced the corpse into fourteen pieces and flung them to the winds.

But Isis, when she discovered this further outrage, sought high and low for the mangled flesh, and recovered every piece but the genitals, which had been eaten by the fishes. Then she enclosed each fragment in a human image of the same size and appearance as Osiris, and arranged for their burial by the priests in as many different cities as there were pieces.

Such is the myth of Osiris as told by the Greek writers who described the wonders of Egypt. But the story as given in native Egyptian accounts has a different ending. When Isis, inspired by wifely devotion, had sought and found the severed pieces of her husband's body, she sat down and wailed in company with her sister Nephthys. "Come to her who loves thee," she wept, "I call after thee and weep, so that my cry is heard in heaven, but thou hearest not my voice. Yet am I thy sister, whom thou didst love on earth. Thou didst love none but me, my brother! my brother!"

Heaven heard her lamentation and answered her appeal. The sun-god Rā sent down Anubis, the jackal-headed god, who helped Isis and Nephthys to piece together the body of the murdered Osiris, and embalm it to the accompaniment of the appropriate ritual. And so was made the first mummy.

Then Osiris revived, but henceforth he ruled not in this world, but in the land of the dead. In that mysterious realm he bore the titles of Lord of the Underworld, Lord of Eternity, Ruler of the Dead. And in his resurrection, his triumph over death, his worshippers saw a promise, if not a guarantee, that they, too, would not be finally and completely dead when their bodies had been laid in the cold and gloomy vault or the warm sand of the desert. "Osiris survived because of the loving care with which his body was tended and preserved; if my body is embalmed, if my friends do for me what the gods and Isis did for Osiris, then I, too, may survive the death of the body and live to all eternity in the world that lies beyond." So they argued; and the bodies of a vast multitude of Egyptians were mummified in precisely similar fashion. Every burial was viewed as a representation of the divine mystery that had been performed over the mangled remains of Osiris; and in some strange way, unhesitatingly believed though very imperfectly

understood, each dead Egyptian was identified with Osiris. He became Osiris. He was called Osiris. As Osiris had died and risen again from the dead, so all who believed in him, in this god-man or man-god who had been slain by evil-doers because of his good deeds, would have, like him, a triumphant resurrection.

But even so, not everyone who died with the name of Osiris on his lips or in his heart was assured of reaching the country of the blest, those "fields of Alu," where the dead lived on in everlasting happiness under Osiris's benevolent rule. Something more than a profession of faith was necessary in order to pass from earth to heaven, something more even than an exact conformity in the embalming of the corpse with the divinely-approved Osirian practice. As Professor Sayce puts it, a knowledge of the ritual with its divine lore and incantations was not sufficient to unlock the gates of the Kingdom of Osiris. Only those were admitted who, like their leader, had done good to men. The Osirian who was allowed to enter in had to be morally as well as ceremonially pure. Osiris was not only a king; he was also a judge, and those who appeared before him had to prove that the life they had lived on earth was in accordance with the highest ideals of human excellence.

This moral test of righteousness is the most remarkable fact connected with the Osirian system of doctrine. The Egyptian who accepted it was called on to acknowledge that orthodoxy in belief and practice was not sufficient to ensure his future salvation; it was needful that he should have avoided sin and been actively benevolent as well. Unlike most ancient forms of faith, morality—and that, too, of a high order—was made an integral part of religion, and even set above it. It was not so much what a man believed as what he had done that enabled him to pass the awful tribunal of heaven and be admitted to everlasting bliss.¹

The Book of the Dead. The path of the dead man from earth to heaven was no easy one, carefully signposted so that it might be followed by saint and sinner with equal ease. On the contrary, it was supposed to be most difficult to find and to follow. Cruel demons of horrible aspect lay in wait for the wayfarer. Yawning chasms had to be negotiated, beetling cliffs scaled, precipices skirted, pits of fire and rivers of boiling water avoided.

So an elaborate guide-book was produced—the Book of the Dead. Sometimes this is described as the Egyptian Bible or the prayer-book of the Osirian faith, but in fact it is a collection of prayers and exorcisms composed at various dates over a long period for the use of the pilgrim-soul in its journey through the Egyptian

¹ Sayce, *The Religion of Ancient Egypt*, p. 173.

Hades. For this reason copies of the text were placed in the tomb, or inscribed and painted on its walls.

The Book of the Dead is extant in three great "recensions" (revisions of the text). The oldest is the Heliopolitan, collected by the priests of On, or Heliopolis; it is found in the pyramids of pharaohs of the sixth dynasty (about 2600 B.C.), and copies of the magical formulas it contains continued to be copied on coffins and sarcophagi until about 200 B.C.

The second recension is the Theban. This was generally written on papyri, and it was much in use during the eighteenth to twentieth dynasties (say 1580 to 1100 B.C.). The British Museum contains the finest collection in the world of the papyri of this recension, in particular the magnificently-coloured Papyrus of Ani, which is 78 ft. long by 1 ft. 3 ins. wide. Much later is the Saïte recension: this dates from about 600 B.C., and it was the one in use during the Ptolemaic period. Then, as faith in the old religion decayed and died, the Book of the Dead was copied less and less frequently until it was practically withdrawn from public use.

Thanks to the instructions given in the opening sections, the dead man arrives at last safely before the throne in the Judgment Hall, where Osiris sits, surrounded by forty-two assessors of divine justice, as well as Thoth and some other deities.

The Negative Confession. Now the dead man is called upon to speak, to say why in his opinion he should be allowed admittance to the fields of Alu. What has his life been on the whole? Has he practised mercy and justice, has he loved the good and refrained from evil deeds? His answer is contained in the 125th chapter of the Book of the Dead, and constitutes what is known as the Negative Confession. Here is Sir Wallis Budge's translation of the chapter as it appears in the Theban recension:

I have not done evil to mankind.

I have not oppressed the members of my family.

I have not wrought evil in the place of right and truth.

I have had no knowledge of worthless men.

I have not wrought evil.

I have not made to be the first consideration of each day that excessive labour should be performed for me.

I have not brought forward my name for exaltation to honours.

I have not ill-treated servants.

I have not thought scorn of God.

I have not defrauded the oppressed one of his property (or I have not caused misery, I have not caused affliction).

I have not done that which is an abomination unto the gods.

I have not caused harm to be done to the servant by his chief.
 I have not caused pain.
 I have made no man to suffer hunger.
 I have made no one to weep.
 I have done no murder.
 I have not given the order for murder to be done for me.
 I have not inflicted pain upon mankind.
 I have not defrauded the temples of their oblations.
 I have not purloined the cakes of the gods.
 I have not carried off the cakes offered to the Khus (spirits of the dead).
 I have not committed fornication.
 I have not polluted myself in the holy places of the god of my city, nor diminished from the bushel.
 I have neither added to nor filched away land.
 I have not encroached upon the fields of others.
 I have not added to the weights of the scales [to cheat the seller].
 I have not misread the pointer of the scales [to cheat the buyer].
 I have not carried away the milk from the mouths of children.
 I have not driven away the cattle which were upon their pastures.
 I have not snared the feathered fowl of the preserves of the gods.
 I have not caught fish with bait made of fish of their kind.
 I have not turned back the water at the time when it should flow.
 I have not cut a cutting in a canal of running water.
 I have not extinguished a fire (or light) where it should burn.
 I have not defrauded the gods of their chosen meat-offerings.
 I have not driven off the cattle from the property of the gods.
 I have not repulsed God in his manifestations.

*I am pure! I am pure! I am pure! I am pure!*¹

The deeds enumerated in the Negative Confession are those abominated by the Egyptians under the eighteenth dynasty (about 1580 to 1321 B.C.), more than three thousand years ago. They were the things that were "not done" by the men and women who watched Tutankhamen's mummy being carried to the gorgeous tomb from which in our own time it was recovered by Howard Carter. Moses, it may be noted, the traditional recipient of the commandments of Jehovah, cannot be dated earlier than the nineteenth dynasty.

The Confession completed, the dead man turns to the forty-two assessors, each of whom was charged with the judgment of one of the transgressions. Then he makes another appeal to Osiris and his fellow gods, not in any cringing temper, but boldly as becomes a man conscious of his own merits. "Hail to you, ye gods who are in the great hall of the Twofold Truth, who have no

¹ *The Book of the Dead*. Trans. Sir. E. A. Wallis Budge (Kegan Paul 1901).

falsehood in your bosoms, but who live on truth . . . in this hour of supreme judgment grant that the deceased may come unto you, he who hath not sinned, who hath neither lied, nor done evil, nor committed any crime." He *deserves* to be saved. Surely they cannot condemn him? He has spread joy on every hand. Men speak admiringly of what he has done, and the gods have rejoiced in his good deeds. He has given bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked. He has provided a boat for some mariners who were shipwrecked. He has offered sacrifices to the gods, and funeral meals to the spirits of the dead. "Deliver him from himself, speak not against him before the lord of the dead, for his mouth is pure and his hands are pure!"

But the man's own protestations of innocence are not sufficient in themselves. He knows it, and his glance turns to the scales, presided over by the god Anubis, in which his heart is even now being placed by Thoth, who, being of a kindly nature so far as erring men are concerned, tilts the balance a little in his favour. It is Thoth who announces the result.

It is a dramatic moment, intense enough to try the nerve of even the most brazen-faced believer in his own virtue. Down goes the pan carrying the heart: innocence has won the verdict.

Thoth turns towards Osiris. "Behold the deceased," he announces, "his heart has been weighed in the balance, in the presence of the Lords of Hades, and has been found true. Not a trace of earthly impurity has been found within it. Let his heart be restored to him. Henceforth let his body lie in the hands of Anubis, who presides over the tombs; let him be as one of those favourites who follow thee. . . ."

So to paradise he goes, to the heaven that is just like Egypt, but with none of its inconveniences. There is work to be done, it is true, but the Ushabtis (the little figures of labourers that were placed in the tombs) will do most of it; and of this we may be sure, there is no *corvée*, no dragging of monster stones from the quarries across the Nile to be piled into the pharaoh's pyramid. No taskmasters with their whips, no tax-collectors, no plagues, perhaps no flies . . . In that blissful country, watered by a celestial Nile, one has nothing to do but to eat and drink, fish and have a game of chess or draughts, love one's wife—who remains always young and beautiful—and play with one's children, who always remain at the most delightful age.

But what if the scales had pointed the other way? In that case

the condemned would have been devoured by the monster Am-mait, "eater of the dead"; or beheaded by Osiris's executioner, or hacked limb from limb; or seized by the "Watchers," who "carry slaughtering knives and have cruel fingers," and cut into little pieces. These were then thrown into pits of fire or the vast Lake of Fire, beside which sat another monster gobbling up hearts: he was the "Devourer for millions of years."

But there was no place of eternal torment in the Egyptian system. The end of the wicked was annihilation.

Moral Precepts. Until quite recent years it was generally supposed that the ancient Egyptians possessed no literature apart from the Book of the Dead and its related religious writings. But sufficient non-religious texts have now been deciphered to establish the existence of a literature, both in poetry and prose, not unworthy to be set beside the literatures of such peoples as the Arabs or Indians. Most of this literature has been preserved in the form of papyri, i.e. copies of classical texts made by youthful scribes working in some school or temple, for the purpose of being placed in tombs with the mummy.

Some of the texts are of an ethical character, e.g. the Precepts of Kagemni, the Precepts of Ptah-hetep, and the Maxims of Ani. All of these inculcate the highest standards of practical morality, and show that the Egyptian had a very lofty idea of the duties that were owed by him to the gods and to his fellow men. Many of the precepts bear comparison with the oft-quoted maxims of the Bible books of Proverbs and Ecclesiasticus, and since there are many parallelisms it is clear that the ancient Hebrew writers were under an obligation to the Egyptian scribes for some at least of their proverbial lore.

Women of Egypt. It is Ptah-hetep who is responsible for this little masterpiece of wedded wisdom: "If you are a man of position, make unto thyself a household and love thy wife in the house as is her due. Fill her belly and clothe her back: give her perfumed oil for her limbs: delight her heart so long as she liveth."

And here is another of the "how to be happy though married" counsels of this ancient moralist of 2600 B.C. "If thou wouldst be a wise man, rule thy house and love thy wife wholly and constantly. Feed her and clothe her, love her tenderly; and fulfil her desires as long as thou livest, for she is an estate which conferreth great reward upon her lord. Be not hard to her, for she will be

more easily moved by persuasion than by force. Observe what she wisheth, and that on which her mind runneth; thereby shalt thou make her to stay in thy house."

Early marriage was the usual practice. Polygamy was countenanced, but it does not seem to have been widespread. The tomb inscriptions bear witness to the tender and passionate love felt by husband and wife.

The married woman in the Egypt of the pharaohs enjoyed considerable liberty. There was no veil for her, no gilded prison behind the barred windows of the harem, no gaol of respectability such as the Athenian lady was forced to endure. She was absolute mistress indoors, where, of course, she spent most of her time: that is why in the tomb paintings she is given a yellow skin as compared with the men who, living almost wholly out of doors, are coloured reddish brown. She could go out and come in just as she pleased. She could talk with her men friends in the street, and it would seem was not above encouraging a *tête-à-tête* at home. "If thou desirest that friendship shall last in a house to which thou hast entry as master or as brother or as friend," runs another of Ptah-hetep's sage counsels, "into whatever place thou enterest, approach not the women. A place where they are is not good. . . ."

To a large extent the Egyptian social system was matriarchal. Descent was traced through the mother; and the mother, like the wife, was held in high honour. "When thou art grown up," says a moralist, "and art married and hast a house, never forget the pains which thou didst cost thy mother, nor the care which she bestowed upon thee."

"Give back twofold the sustenance that thy mother gave thee," reads another piece of kindly counsel. "Support her as she supported thee. Long did she bear the burden of thee, and forsook thee not. When thou wast born after thy term of months, she carried thee on her shoulder; three years long her nipple was in thy mouth. . . . She put thee to school where thou shouldst be taught thy letters, and waited upon thee daily, bringing food to the hungry ones in her home . . . Let her not find cause of complaint in thee, or lift up her hands to God, lest he hear her cry!"

Not that fathers were left out in the cold. "I was a staff-of-old-age by my father's side while he was yet upon earth," reads one inscription. "I went in and out at his command, and transgressed not the utterances of his mouth . . . I made not bold to do that whereof he was unaware. I knew not the handmaid of his

house; I lay not with his serving-maid. I did not curse his butler; nor did I enter in before him violently.”¹

Egypt had many great queens in her long history. Women played an important part, too, in the priesthood, if only in a subordinate capacity. They were in charge of the musical accompaniment to divine service, whether the god worshipped was a male or female. Some of these musician-priestesses seem to have formed a harem of concubines for the great god Amen-Ra, and one was described as the “God’s wife.” But there is no reason to believe that these were “slaves of the gods”—temple prostitutes, in other words.

The number of goddesses may have contributed to the elevation of woman’s lot, and we may be sure that the holy family of ancient Egypt was an influential factor in dignifying the relations of marriage and parenthood. Isis, it may be recalled, was a deity of the first rank in her own right; she had a cult quite distinct from that of Osiris, one that was immensely popular in the Roman world after the incorporation of Egypt within the Empire. Figures of Isis nursing the infant Horus are a prototype of the Madonna and Child.

Vices and Virtues. If one may believe the temple testimonials to the departed, the Egyptians were a people of the highest virtue. They are described as “kindly lovers of men.” So-and-so is made to say, “I have not oppressed my fellows”; “I was father to the orphan, a husband to the widow, a shelter to the cold”; “I saved the miserable man from him who was more powerful than he”; “I gave bread to the hungry, clothes to the naked”; “I lauded the old man, I gave to him my staff. I caused aged women to say, ‘This is a happy time.’”

Yet at the same time there were some brutal features in Egyptian life. Capital punishment would seem to have been an everyday occurrence. Prisoners-of-war were frequently put to death; and after a battle in which they had proved victorious the Egyptian soldiery cut off the hands and phall^{us} of their slain enemies as trophies. There is some reason to believe that on occasion human sacrifices were offered up to the gods, particularly on the tomb of Osiris. The bastinado was the customary punishment inflicted on malefactors whose sins and crimes were not so heinous as to require decapitation. Slaves, very numerous as the conquests spread over the Near East, were treated, it would seem, with no undue harshness.

¹ See *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 5; art. “Ethics and Morality: Egyptian.”

The vices of the Egyptians were those that have been practised from the beginning of time. Sins of an exuberant flesh were a commonplace. Fornication was easy enough, since loose women abounded; the dancing girls portrayed practically naked or clad only in diaphanous shifts on the walls of temple and tomb were probably members of the prostitute class. Pre-nuptial chastity was held in light esteem. A lord of Elephantine in the sixth dynasty has left on record his boast that he had had "a good time with women." "Beware of the strange woman, who is not known in her town," runs an excellent piece of advice; "approach her not, and know her not in bodily wise."

Then there was drunkenness. "Don't corrupt thyself by drinking beer," runs a maxim of Ani. "A speech issues from thy mouth, and thou knowest not who says it. Thou fallest, and thy limbs are broken, and no one lendeth thee a hand. Thy companions in drinking stand by and say, 'Away with the drunkard!' Some one comes to seek thee to speak with thee, and thou art found lying on the ground like a child!" Even women were given to taking more than they could carry, as is clear enough from the paintings of dinner parties in which a lady is being violently sick in a corner, while an understanding maid stands by ready to help.

Such pictures as these suggest that the Egyptians were a jovial crowd enough, given to eating and drinking, music and dancing and general merry-making.

Yet it is a fact that no people have been so preoccupied with death and the after life. There was always a skeleton at the feast: sometimes a mummy was carried round to remind the diners that "such as this is now so thou shalt be when thou art dead." The spectre of mortality was never far away; and the ingenious shifts to dodge his grim destroying shadow—the embalmings and the paintings, the making of images which were placed in the tomb in the fond belief that so long as they endured the soul of the man they represented would still be permitted to exist in the land of the shades—such ingenious shifts and desperate subterfuges are pathetic when their meaning is understood.

CHAPTER III

BABYLONIA

OF late years the archæologists have been busily digging in the rubbish heaps and layers of mud of the Euphrates-Tigris valleys, to such good purpose that it is now seriously maintained that it was in Mesopotamia rather than in Egypt that what we call civilization had its beginnings. At Kish the excavators have laid bare the brick floor of the Sumerian kings of five thousand years ago. At Susa they have dug down a hundred feet and more to find the delicately-made and beautifully-ornamented pottery of a culture that flourished at least four thousand years before Christ. And at Ur—the Ur of the Chaldees of the Bible story—that was an old, old city when Abraham left it to start the Jewish race on their eternal wanderings—Sir Leonard Woolley has penetrated to the level of 3500 B.C., and has resurrected from their earthen tomb the jewels, musical instruments, and pottery of the men and women who dwelt in the land before the Flood. Those who saw the “finds” when they were exhibited at the British Museum a few years ago will remember the “golden ram caught in a thicket,” the lyres with their bulls’ heads of gold, and the gold-flowered and beribboned head-dresses that adorned the lovely women of ages since. Such is the beauty of the design, the magnificence of execution, that these works challenge comparison with the best that is offered in the Rue de Rivoli and Regent Street.

Yet all the same we *have* progressed. If Sir Leonard Woolley has revealed to us some of the wonder of the past, he has shown us something of its horror too. It was at Ur that there was opened up that death-pit in which were the remains of sixty-eight women, neatly arranged in overlapping rows, and six men—these lying near the entrance, and armed with daggers. With tender care and scientific precision they were extracted from the dust and made into museum exhibits. There they lay in the showcase, those poor heads, girls’ heads, flattened by the weight of tons of earth through five thousand and more years, yet still bearing about their brows the gay coronals of golden leaves and flowers that were once the occasion of such joy and pride.

No whisper of explanation of the ancient tragedy came through the lips that men had once kissed. But it is surmised that the women were the wives and concubines of a king, and that they were massacred on his death so that he should not go unaccompanied into the gloomy land of the shades. The monarch's passing sounded the death-knell of his harem, and the male servants who dealt the fatal blows were slain or slew themselves when the bloody deed was done. Then the tomb was sealed, and ages passed before the light of day broke in again on one of the earliest instances of loyalty and love up to the gates of death, and, if human will could make it so, beyond.

Hammurabi's Code. When the "death-pit of Ur" had kept its guilty and possibly forgotten secrets for many a century, a great king arose in Babylonia, i.e. the lower basin of the Euphrates-Tigris. Hammurabi had a long reign, from about 2123 to 2080 B.C., and he lives in history not only as a great unifier, making a compact kingdom out of a host of tiny city-states with Babylon as its capital, but as the collector of the laws contained in the great Code known by his name. By a most fortunate chance a *stèle* or pillar of diorite, with the Code chipped imperishably into its hard black surface, was discovered at Susa by French archæologists in 1902. It is now among the chief treasures of the Louvre, while a fine copy is in the British Museum. Not long after its discovery the Code was translated, and one of the oldest and most important documents of the human race became an open book.¹

The Code opens with the statement that Anu and Bel, two of the chief gods of the Babylonian pantheon, had called "me, the renowned prince, the god-fearing Hammurabi, to establish justice on the earth, to destroy the base and wicked, and to hold back the strong from oppressing the feeble." Then, after a long list of eulogistic references to himself, we are told that "when Merodach [another god] had instituted me governor of men, to conduct and to direct, Law and Justice I established in the land, for the good of the people."

The Code itself opens with the enactment that "if a man has laid a curse upon another man, and it is not justified, the layer of the curse shall be slain." •

The second clause reads: "If a man has thrown a spell upon another man, and it is not justified, he who has suffered the spell

¹ See *The World's Earliest Laws*, by Chilperic Edwards (Watts), from which the extracts that follow are taken.

shall proceed to the holy river: into the holy river shall he plunge. If the holy river seize him, the layer of the spell shall take his house. If the holy river hold him guiltless, and he remains unharmed, the layer of the spell shall be slain. He that plunged into the holy river shall take the house of the layer of the spell." This is a reminder of the witch-finding ordeals practised in this country up to not much more than a couple of centuries ago.

Then the Code proceeds to lay down the rules that are to regulate agriculture and commerce, the treatment of women and



Hammurabi receiving the Code of Law from Shamash, the Sun-God. (Upper portion of the stele engraved with the text.)

slaves, the institution of property, the marriage relationship, and indeed, all the other departments of life that the law-makers of the twenty-first century B.C. thought fit to include.

One of the Code's most striking features is the number of crimes for which the death penalty is imposed. No mention is made of long-term or convict imprisonment; offenders are doomed to die, to mutilation, or to pay a fine. Among those whose punishment is death are the man who gives false evidence in a lawsuit that involves a life; the stealer of the goods of a god, and likewise the

receiver of the stolen booty; the thief who makes off with an ox or sheep, a boat, etc., and cannot make restitution of the stolen goods; the householder who harbours a fugitive slave; the builder who builds a house of such faulty workmanship that it falls and kills the occupier; the soldier who in order to dodge conscription, has hired a substitute to go in his place. A man who breaks into a house shall be slain before the breach, and there buried. A man who, when helping to extinguish a fire, "lifts" some of the householder's goods under cover of the confusion is to be thrown into the flames forthwith. A priestess who leaves the convent and opens a tavern, or enters one to have a drink, shall be burned. A woman innkeeper who allows rebels to meet in her establishment and does not denounce them to the "great house" shall be slain.

"If a man's wife, because of another male, has killed her husband, that woman shall be impaled upon a stake." A nurse who surreptitiously substitutes another child for the one entrusted to her charge shall have her breasts cut off. Otherwise murder is not mentioned in the Code, from which it is deduced that its punishment was generally held to be no matter for the community at large, but for the relations of the victim: in other words, the principle of the vendetta would be applied.

Slavery was a recognized institution in ancient Babylonia, but it resembled the slavery of Mohammedan lands rather than that of Christian America in the nineteenth century. The slave was a member of the family establishment. He might be sold at his master's will, and so might his wife and family—unless he married a free woman, when his children by her were free. A slave girl who bore children to her husband, a free man, could not be sold, and at the man's death she and the children were emancipated. Slaves were liable to maltreatment, and their position is well illustrated by the rule that "if a man has destroyed the eye of a man's slave, or broken a bone of a man's slave, he shall pay half his value," whereas the man who knocks out the eye or breaks a bone of another free man shall have one of his own eyes knocked out or one of his own bones broken. Similarly, the man who strikes a slave girl, with the result that she has a miscarriage, shall pay two shekels of silver to her master; if the girl be the daughter of a free man, then the fine is ten shekels. If the slave girl die of the blow, then the man shall pay a third of a mina of silver; if the daughter of the free man dies, then the daughter of the man who struck her shall be slain.

But it is carefully laid down that the owner of a slave is responsible for his proper medical treatment.

Many clauses in the Code deal with marriage. In theory, marriage in Babylonia was by purchase, the father of the bride receiving the bride-price in payment for the loss of her services. But Babylonian brides were not the property of their husbands, in spite of this "purchase"; and furthermore, the bride herself received a dowry from her father, which may have been equivalent to the bride-price. This dowry was the wife's own property: she could will it to her children, and it was hers in the event of a divorce not of her causing, or if she were treated so badly by her husband that she found it necessary to return to her father's house.

A man might have several wives, but most of the marriages were monogamous. If a wife were a permanent invalid, or sterile, her husband was justified in taking another spouse. Divorce was an easy matter for the man, provided he made a small financial settlement on the woman put away.

One clause reads: If a man's wife, dwelling in a man's house, has set her face to leave, has been guilty of dissipation, has wasted her house, and has neglected her husband, then she shall be prosecuted. If her husband says, "She is divorced," he shall let her go her way; he shall give her nothing for divorce. If her husband says, "She is not divorced," he may espouse another woman, and the first wife shall remain a slave in the house of her husband.

Another clause, a very enlightened one even by modern standards, runs: If a woman hate her husband and say, "Thou shalt not possess me," the reason for her dislike shall be inquired into. If she is careful, and has no fault, but her husband takes himself away and neglects her, then that woman is not to blame. She shall take her dowry, and go back to her father's house. If, however, she has not been careful, but runs out, wastes her house, and neglects her husband, then that woman shall be thrown into the water (i.e. subjected to the ordeal mentioned above).

"If the wife of a man is found lying with another male, they shall be bound and thrown into the water; unless the husband lets his wife live, and the king lets his servant live. If a man has forced the wife of another man, who has not known the male, and who still resides in her father's house, and has lain within her breasts, and he is found, that man shall be slain; the woman is guiltless."

The wife of a prisoner-of-war who lives with another man during her husband's absence, to keep herself and her children alive, is deserving of no blame. But if she went to the other man when there was still food in the house, then she is to be prosecuted and thrown into the water. In the former case, any children she may bear to her protector "shall follow their father," but when her husband comes back from the wars she shall rejoin him as his lawful wife.

One more enactment may be given, without comment: it needs none. "If a mad bull meet a man in the highway and gore him, and kill him, that case has no remedy."

And so we come to the conclusion of "the judgments of justice which Hammurabi, the mighty king, has established, conferring upon the land a sure guidance and a gracious rule"—the land "of the blackheaded race that Bel has entrusted to me, and over whom Merodach has made me shepherd."

Hammurabi, it is clear, regarded himself as the chosen agent and representative of the gods on earth, and he summoned all the chief members of the Babylonian pantheon to support by their authority the laws he had decreed and to punish those who in days to come might venture to disobey or even to alter or diminish them in the slightest degree. He called on Bel, the god of the earth, "who fixes fate, whose word is unalterable"; Merodach (Marduk), the city god of Babylon, and Ea, "the great prince," the patron deity of Eridu; Shamash, the sun god, "great judge of heaven and earth," and Sin, the moon god, "lord of the heavens"; Adad, "lord of fertility," Nergal, and Zamama; and the goddesses Beltis, "the great mother, the lady who gives ear to my desires in the place of justice and statutes before Bel," and Ishtar, "mistress of battles and combats, who wields my weapons, my guardian angel. . . ."

Legend of Ishtar. Several clauses in the Hammurabi Code refer to various grades of female attendants at the temples of the gods—to holy sisters, priestesses, consecrated women, and temple maidens. It would seem that this service constituted a career for women outside the home, and the fact that all the grades are mentioned in the Code with respect tells against the view that they were religious prostitutes. And it is interesting to note that the Code, and indeed the mass of Babylonian and Assyrian documents that have been deciphered (including many marriage contracts in which the bride is referred to as "the virgin so-and-so"), give no

support to the story told by the ancient Greek historian Herodotus that every Babylonian girl was required to sacrifice her virginity within the precincts of the temple of Mylitta (Ishtar), the goddess of love.

If there were indeed such a custom, then it very likely had its origin in the conception of a Mother Goddess, a female divinity who mated every year with a human lover. In Babylonia the goddess was Ishtar, and her lover Tammuz or Adonis; and, as Sir James Frazer puts it, their fabulous union was simulated, and as it were, multiplied on earth by the real, though temporary, union of the human sexes at the sanctuary of the goddess, for the sake of thereby ensuring the fruitfulness of the ground and the increase of man and beast.

Of all the legends associated with Ishtar's name, the most appealing is surely this that tells of her love for Tammuz, the "only begotten"—the love that took her through the gates of death into the dread realm of the dead. It is inscribed on a tablet in the Assyrian Room at the British Museum.

Tammuz was a shepherd, whom Ishtar espied one day as he tended his flock on the mountainside. He was young, handsome, virile, and to him the goddess lost her heart and gave her body. She loved him in preference to all her other suitors, and they were many. One day, however, the idyll came to a tragic end. Tammuz was slain by a wild boar, and was forthwith cast into Hades.

Bereft of her lover, Ishtar is inconsolable; but soon she bethinks herself of the marvellous spring that gushed up beside the threshold of the palace of Allatu, the dread queen of the underworld—a spring that was closely guarded, for it possessed the power of restoring to life all who bathed in its waters. Emboldened by love and unsatisfied desire, Ishtar sets out to find the spring and to bring back her lover into the land of the living.

"To the land without return . . . to the house from which he who goes shall never come back, to the house into which he who enters bids farewell to the light"; to the region of the dead, "whose bread is dust, whose food is mud, who see not the light, who dwell in darkness, and who are clothed like birds in apparel of feathers." Arrived at the first of the seven gates of Hades, she bids the porter open. "Guardian of the waters, open thy gate . . . If thou openest not the door that I may enter, I will burst open the door, I will break the bars, I will break the threshold, I will burst in the panels. I will excite the dead that they may eat the

living—and the dead shall be more numerous than the living.” Thus summoned, the porter opens the gate, and Ishtar enters.

Then she finds that the rulers of the underworld are no respecters of persons. “Why dost thou take the great crown from off my head?” she asks, as the guardian imperiously removes it. “Such is the law of Allatu,” he replies. At the second gate the guardian divests her of her earrings. “Why dost thou remove the rings from my ears?” “It is the law of Allatu.” Then as gate after gate is opened for her passing, the guardian deprives her in turn of her necklace, the tunic which covers her bosom, her enamelled girdle, her bracelets and ankle rings. Finally, as the seventh gate swings open, he strips her of her last garment.

Naked she enters the presence of the grim Allatu, and at once assails her in an attempt to win back by force the life of Tammuz. But Allatu is too powerful, and at her command Ishtar is led away to punishment. “Strike her eyes with the affliction of the eyes,” commands the queen, “strike her loins with the affliction of the loins, strike her feet with the affliction of the feet, strike her heart with the affliction of the heart, strike her head with the affliction of the head, strike violently at her, at her whole body.”

Meanwhile, up above, in the world of light and the living, they are mourning the missing goddess of love. During her absence men and animals alike must refrain from intercourse. At last the gods become thoroughly alarmed at the approaching extinction of their worshippers and offerings. Realizing that Ishtar will never return without her lover, Ea, the supreme god, despatches a servant to obtain from Allatu permission to drink of the waters of the magic spring. Allatu is furious. She curses, beats her sides, gnaws her fingers, but at last obeys. The life-giving water is poured on Ishtar and once again she lives. Once again she passes through the gates, but this time bringing Tammuz with her. At each gate she receives back, one by one, the garments and ornaments of which she had been bereft. At last she emerges from the underworld, and men and women are at liberty to love and be loved once again.

But every year the drama must be re-enacted. Every year in those Asiatic lands Tammuz was believed to die, to be led away into the world of the shades; every year about midsummer men and women recalled his slaying by the sharp-tusked boar, and mourned his passing with the music of flutes and the chant of dirges. Every year Ishtar was supposed to descend into the under-

world to fetch back her slaughtered lover, the while on earth love was not for man or beast.

Writers of a later day have seen in the legend nothing but a nature-myth; the death of Tammuz and his stay in Hades is merely a representation of winter, they say, while his return is symbolical of the coming of spring, the revival of vegetation after its long sleep. It may be so; but those Babylonian girls of long ago, those women whom Ezekiel beheld "weeping for Tammuz" in the porch of the Temple at Jerusalem, would have scornfully rejected such an "explanation." To them the story was surely no myth, but something vitally true; they wept, they tore their hair, they scratched their breasts, because as women they could understand the all-compelling love that burned in Ishtar's bosom. So the Babylonian goddess, descending into the underworld, attracted the love and worship of countless devotees. With divinities as with men self-sacrifice is sometimes the surest road to immortality.

CHAPTER IV

GREECE AND ROME

IN the world of the classical civilization of Greece and Rome there were two religions, the Religion of Paganism and the Religion of Philosophy.

The word Paganism comes from the Latin for a villager or countryman; and throughout its course of more than a thousand years Paganism was the religion of the common folk, of the largely untaught and illiterate masses in town and country alike who approached the divinities housed in Jupiter's palace on Olympus in the same friendly and unquestioning spirit as is shown to-day by the peasants in the remoter parts of Italy and Spain, when they turn for comfort and guidance to the minor lights of the Roman Catholic system.

Reading about these pagan deities in the pages of the ancient writers, it is difficult to believe that any sane being—and the Greeks in particular were eminently sane and keen-witted—could have really believed in the actual existence of these unprincipled ruffians and trollops. "Homer and Hesiod have ascribed to the gods all things that are a shame and a disgrace among men," wrote Xenophanes, the boldly rationalistic thinker who lived in Ionia (Asia Minor) in the sixth century B.C., "theft and adulteries and deception of one another." In another of the all too few surviving fragments of his writings he spoke in contempt of the prevailing anthropomorphism. "Mortals think that the gods are born as they are, and have senses, and a voice and body like their own. So the Ethiopians make their gods black and snub-nosed; the Thracians give theirs red hair and blue eyes."

Yet the man in the street and the woman in the home loved these strange creations of the poet's fancy, loved them and for the most part never dreamed of copying their way of life.

There was Father Zēús, the king of the gods—the Romans called him Jupiter. He was violent in temper and deed, lustful, given to tricks and treachery. But he was also the embodiment of justice and mercy, and it was the carving of his statue that engaged the highest powers of the incomparable Pheidias. Later

Greek and Roman writers have put it on record that this statue of Zeus Olympius had such majesty and beauty that "it seemed to have added something to the revealed religion," and that "having once seen it, one could not imagine God otherwise," and "the sight of it was a nepenthe for personal sorrow."

Zeus seems to have been originally the sky god, but even in Homeric times he was much more than this. The Greeks did not as a rule actually identify their deities with the elements and the forces of Nature, as did, for example, the Aryan Indians. They were not very curious concerning the origin of their objects of worship; and they had no hesitation in making room in their already crowded pantheon for a divinity who had attractive qualities or seemed likely to answer some elemental human need.

The Family of the Gods. Scholars have dissected the pantheon into those gods and goddesses who were brought in as part of the Indo-Germanic inheritance of the Hellenes (as the Greeks called themselves) and those who were survivors from the Minoan-Mycenæan age.

In the first or northern group have been placed Zeus himself; Apollo, the god of light and also of medicine and music; Ares, the god of war or warlike frenzy; Poseidon, lord of the sea; Dionysus, the suffering god; Demeter, the earth-mother; and Hestia, the goddess of the hearth. On the other hand, Athena, the Madonna of Athens; and Hera, "the Excellent One," whom the Argives worshipped as Zeus's wife; Aphrodite, whom the Romans identified with Venus, the goddess of love; Artemis, in whom they similarly recognized Diana the virgin huntress; Rhea, hardly distinguishable from the earth; and Hephæstus the smith, belonged to the pre-Hellenic Mediterranean stock.

These are only the most important and outstanding of the divine multitude. There were scores and hundreds of other divinities, great and small, who were associated with particular things and places. Just as the Romans thought of the Numen, the power or spirit dwelling in trees and fountains and rivers, in the wind on the heath and in the earth itself, so the Greeks had the idea of the nymphs who personified, in their lovely and ethereal shapes, natural objects of one kind and another. Fond of music and dancing they were supposed to be, but not immortal; in them we have perhaps the first of the fairies. The nine Muses, too, who had in their care the different arts—history and tragedy, astronomy

and sacred song, epic poetry, comedy, and so on—constituted another delightful enlargement of the family on Olympus.

Then there was the underworld, a place that was dark and gloomy and sad. This, too, was peopled by spirit forms, some of them vindictive and venomous, such as the Furies—represented as women with wings and wreathed with snakes—who were avengers of crime, called into malign activity by the blood of the wrongfully slain. Below the earth was the realm of Hades, god of the nether world, where lay the plain of Asphodel across which wandered the ghosts of the dead in a vague, insubstantial existence, separated from the world of the living by the Styx or the Acheron or "Lethe, the river of oblivion." The Greeks believed in a heaven—Elysium, the home of the blessed, and in a hell—Tartarus, where the enemies of the gods and men expiated their misdeeds. Each ghost, as it descended from the world of light, was arraigned before the judgment-seat of the gods of the dead, who assigned to each its appropriate abode. The matter was one of strict accounting. As a man had lived, so he was judged. There was never a suggestion of vindictiveness. Sin had its consequence, but man to a large extent was the master of his own fate. The Greeks never conceived a Satan who should roam the world tempting souls to their eternal loss and destruction, and their hell was a milk-and-water affair compared with that of Christian or Mohammedan fancy.

Worship in the temples was mostly a matter of sacrifices of cakes, grain, and other foods laid on the altar and burnt, and libations of wine or milk or honey. But animals might be slaughtered at the altar with solemn ritual—cattle and sheep and goats, occasionally horses and pigs and even dogs. This was a bloody business, particularly when the service required that the worshippers should be sprinkled or splashed with the crimson gore. After the killing, the carcasses were generally consumed entirely in the flames.

Sometimes the sacrifices were *piacular*, i.e. as expiation of some offence or to avert some threatened evil; more usually they were tributary, representing a gift to the god of food and drink for his own use. Occasionally they were the killing of an animal—or of a human being—in which the god was deemed to have been incarnated: the debilitated and decaying vehicle being slain, the way was opened for the indwelling divine spirit to remove into one younger and more vigorous. Sacrifices were almost always accompanied by prayer; and apart from the actual killings there must have been much in the temple services that was both solemn and beautiful.

The Delphic Oracle. But more impressive and awe-inspiring must have been the sessions of the famous oracle at Delphi, which for centuries was not only the supreme theological authority in Greece, but practically the only centre of the Greek people as a whole. The seat of the oracle was Apollo's temple; and here, in a golden cauldron placed on a golden trivet standing on a column formed of three twisting snakes—the column which has stood in the heart of Istanbul since Constantine transferred it there some sixteen hundred years ago—the priestess sat above a fissure in the rock, inhaling the fumes and writhing in ecstasy. Before her were grouped the attendant masters of the oracle, who took down the usually incoherent words she uttered in reply to the questions put to her by the suppliants. As the divine spirit moved her, so she was supposed to reply—though cool, hard calculation may well have entered into the oracles from time to time as political necessity or economic need made it advisable. Her words were interpreted by the priests, generally in verses whose indifferent quality was somewhat puzzling to the ancients, who thought that the gods might be expected to compose at least as well as men. Those oracles that have been preserved suggest that they were a mixture of practical wisdom, triviality, and downright fraud and deception. But it is only right to mention that when questions of morality were raised, the answers were frequently of a high ethical character. Many a man who went to Delphi in the hope of obtaining the god's approval and support of some not altogether proper project was sent scurrying back along the mountain path, his ears tingling with the indignant scoldings of the outraged deity.

Eleusinian Mysteries. Another great centre of Hellenic worship was Eleusis, a little town near the sea only some ten miles from Athens, where there was a far-famed sanctuary of Demeter. Here were performed the Eleusinian mysteries, rites and ceremonies of a secret kind that are very largely mysteries still. We do not know for certain what the worshippers saw or heard or did within the sacred enclosure. Only from here and there in the ancient writings have we a hint. There were religious or dramatic performances, permitted to be witnessed only by the initiates. There was a solemn ritual of initiation, including a torchlight procession, an all-night vigil, a long wait by the neophytes seated on stools in stony silence, ended at length by holy communion with the divinity—the drinking of a draught of barley-water from a consecrated chalice.

There would seem to be little doubt that at Eleusis the goddess Demeter was worshipped as a corn-goddess; in other words, the mysteries were intended to encourage the fertility of Nature and of the bread crop in particular.

The Homeric "Hymn to Demeter," in which the beautiful legend of Demeter and Persephone finds earliest relation, is an attempt to explain the origin of the Eleusinian mysteries.

Persephone—the divine girl whom the Greeks called also Korē (the maiden), while the Romans knew her as Proserpina—was the daughter of Zeus and Demeter. One day as she was picking posies of crocuses and violets, hyacinths and narcissi in the Sicilian fields, she was snatched up by Hades (or Pluto), lord of the dead, who carried her away in triumph to his gloomy tenement beneath the ground. Demeter sought her sorrowing, all over the world, and in her wrath she enjoined that, until her daughter was found, the earth should be barren. In her wanderings Demeter came at length to Eleusis, where, disguised as an old woman, she was most hospitably entertained by the local king. In recognition of his kindness she revealed her identity and gave instructions that mysteries should be instituted at Eleusis in her honour. Meanwhile not a seed sprouted, and a fearful famine threatened the people. Thoroughly alarmed at last, Zeus despatched an order to Hades to release his captive, and Persephone was allowed to return to the light of day once again. But Hades made the bargain that she should henceforth spend a third of the year with him in the underworld, and the rest with her mother and the other gods in the upper world. Thus the coming of the spring flowers was taken by the Greeks to symbolize the return of Persephone, ransomed by a mother's love—just as the Babylonians, thinking and dreaming along very similar lines, spoke of Ishtar and Adonis her youthful lover.

But a deeper meaning became attached to the ancient legend and to the mysteries that accompanied its periodical revival. Persephone, raped by the lord of death, was yet restored to the land of the living. The seed that is placed in the cold earth in due season germinates and sprouts and grows into the lordly wheat. Why, then, should not the human body that is laid in the tomb or grave dug in the earth—why should not it too have a rebirth, a glorious resurrection?

There is plenty of evidence to show that the ancient Greeks who thronged the courts of Demeter's temple regarded initiation

into the Eleusinian mysteries as a key that would unlock the gates of Paradise. "No doubt it is easy for us," Sir James Frazer has written, "to discern the flimsiness of the logical foundation on which such high hopes were built." But drowning men clutch at straws, and "the reasoning that satisfied Saint Paul and has brought comfort to untold thousands of sorrowing Christians, standing by the deathbed or the open grave of their loved ones, was good enough to pass muster with ancient pagans, when they too bowed their heads under the burden of grief, and, with the taper of life burning low in the socket, looked forward into the darkness of the unknown."¹

Dionysus. It does not seem that there was any very definite connection between the Eleusinian mysteries and morality; and the same may be said of the other cults, mysterious and mystical, that attracted the devotion of those who were eager to reach beyond the realm of sense. Perhaps the most important of these was that of Dionysus, originally the god of vegetation and later the god of wine, who was born of Semele when she was impregnated by Zeus in all the splendour of a god. Grown to adulthood, Dionysus is represented in the old traditions as making a triumphant progress through the world, accompanied by a throng of ecstatic votaries, male and female, who conducted themselves in the most abandoned fashion.

Dionysus was another of the gods who were believed to die and to rise again. One version of the legend tells that he ascended the throne of Zeus, but was soon slain by the Titans, who cut him to bits with their knives while he was admiring his comely form in a mirror. A variant says that the Titans boiled and ate the pieces. Then, in some way not very clearly related, the "Suffering God" was brought to life again—he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. But this is clear, that the passion of Dionysus was re-enacted by his worshippers periodically, and that the most prominent feature of the rite was the tearing to pieces, with the teeth, of a live bull, followed by the eating of the raw and still palpitating flesh and the drinking of the warm and steamy blood. A horrible rite enough, and one strangely at variance with the usually bright and sunny Greek character. But there is an explanation.

The Dionysiacs, there is good reason to suppose, were inspired by the belief that by rending and devouring a live bull at the god's festival they were killing the god, and engaging in a sacred

¹ *The Golden Bough*, c. xliv.

meal. And what then? Surely this, that by so doing they were joining themselves with the divine, obtaining a share in the divine nature; so that just as Dionysus himself had triumphed over death and risen again, so they, having eaten his body and drunk his blood, would share in his glorious resurrection and eternal life.

But there was also the conception of Dionysus as a god of fertility. His attendants were the Satyrs, spirits of the woods and hills who were possessed of forms half-human and half-bestial, such as the body of a man and the legs of a goat. These grotesque creatures were supposed to be particularly given to licentious dancing and abandoned revelry. So, too, were the Mænads, the "mad women" who were votaries of the god, and the Bacchantes, the priestesses of the cult (Bacchus being another name for Dionysus), who, with dishevelled hair and garlanded with boughs of ivy, clashed their cymbals and danced with tipsy joy before the ithyphallic statue of the young and handsome divinity. Here, it is plain, are the makings of a fertility cult, and there can be little doubt that the orgies—which were the peculiar contribution of the worship of Dionysus to Greek religious experience—concluded in the actual performance of sexual union. In this way the Dionysiacs, like so many Oriental sectaries, hoped by their example to stimulate and encourage the powers of Nature to bear seed and offspring in a glorious abundance.

Orpheus. Another of the mystical religions was Orphicism, that grew in and around the myth of Orpheus, a Greek hero and poet who was supposed to have been the son of Apollo and Calliope, one of the Muses. His divine parent bestowed on him the lyre; and such was the music that Orpheus evoked from its strings that men and beasts, and even birds of the air and the fishes in the sea, the very trees and rocks, were moved to ecstasy. He accompanied the Argonauts on their expedition, and it was he who by his playing saved his companions from becoming victims of the clinging and deadly love of the Sirens. He married Eurydice, a dryad or wood-nymph; and when the girl, running through the woods to escape the unwelcome attentions of Aristæus, trod on a snake and was bitten and died, Orpheus went down into Hades to recover her.

Such was the wondrous beauty and prevailing charm of his music that Persephone, whom Pluto had made the queen of the infernal regions, was induced to let her go—on one condition: that Orpheus, as he ascended with Eurydice, should not look back

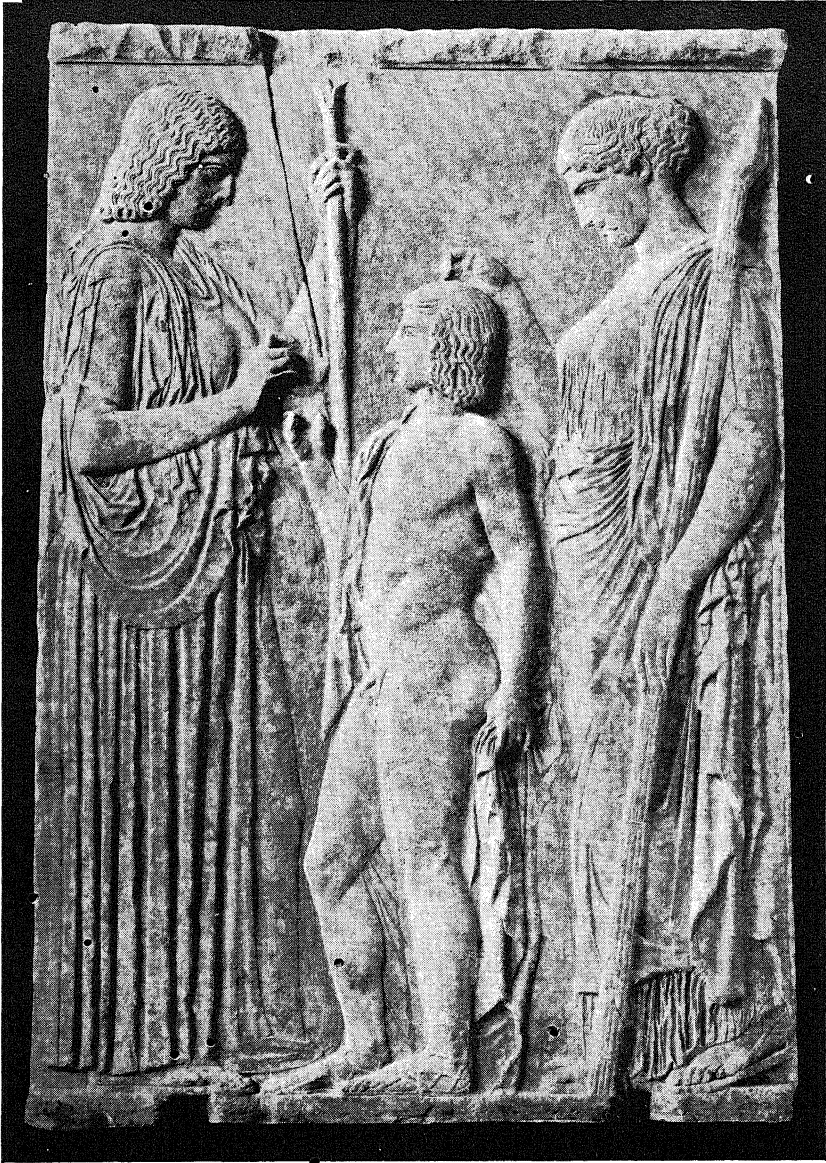
on the way he had come. But alas, as they were about to break out of the gloom into the light of day, Orpheus, perhaps to see if she was still close behind him, threw a glance in her direction. At once Eurydice vanished from his sight, and vanished for ever.

Orpheus returned to the world alone, and before long met a tragic end, being torn to pieces by the Mænads because he had profaned the Dionysian rites or because of the hatred he had conceived for all women since Eurydice had been lost to him.

Out of this myth—surely one of the loveliest of the legends that the Greek fancy has created and bequeathed to us, and moreover one of a very pronounced ethical value, founded as it is on the deathless love of a man for his wife—there evolved in the course of centuries a mystic religion that was for long very popular among the ancients. A vast Orphic literature came into existence, a philosophy was thought out, a ritual devised; the time came when there was even an Orphic brotherhood, a kind of monastic order whose members abstained from meat (but not from wine), dressed in white robes, lived in semi-ascetic conditions, and practised purifications and arts of divination that gradually descended into sheer jugglery.

Orpheus was linked with Dionysus, or rather with the Thracian version of the god, Dionysus Zagreus, becoming his divine priest or bard. Dionysus, according to the Orphics, was the son of Zeus and Persephone, and at the instigation of the jealous Hera he had been torn to pieces and devoured by the Titans. But his heart was saved by Athene and conveyed to Zeus, who burnt up the wicked Titans with his lightnings. From their ashes sprang the race of men, who thus have something of the divine in their nature, derived from Zeus. Man is a mixture, taught the Orphics, and in this way they explained the existence of good and evil in the human composition. The earthly or evil element may be refined and transmuted by living a life of strict purity—or rather lives, for they believed in reincarnation. They also held the doctrine of a future life, of a hell where men's sins were punished and of a realm where the soul, emancipated at last from its dross and taints, lived for evermore in perfect bliss.

This was a new and great departure from the primitive Greek religion. Of old time it was held that the gods were omnipotent and unpredictable in their awards of weal and woe. But the man who had embraced the Orphic teaching was not without hope. The gods he probably regarded with an amused contempt. He



DIVINITIES OF ANCIENT GREECE

Demeter and Persephone, with the youth Triptolemos, represented
in an austere beautiful relief from Eleusis.

felt that he himself could make or mar his eternal destiny. If he willed, he could be good, he could be happy, he could defy the power of death. Virtue could win a glorious immortality.

Roman Paganism. Turning now to the religion of the Romans, we find in Virgil, as in Homer, the expression of the completest anthropomorphism. The Roman pantheon is like the goddesses its essentials: the names are different, but the gods and Greek in are as many and as amoral. But it may be noted that the primitive religion of the Latins was a much simpler affair, a kind of animism in which the *numina* or spirits of woods, springs, rivers, and above all the farms and homesteads, are far more important, far more closely linked with the everyday life of the people, than are the gods. Every Roman house, at least in the earlier centuries of the Republic, had its shrine in which stood the emblems or statuettes of the Lares and Penates—the spirits whose particular job it was to keep the home and its inmates healthy and happy and free from harm.

This religion of *pietas*—piety shown to the gods, the family and the State—endured up to and beyond the coming of Christianity. Particularly among the countryfolk—the real *pagani*—was it accepted as being entirely satisfactory and sufficient. But there were many, more especially in the towns and among the cultured classes everywhere, who hankered for something more colourful, more comforting, perhaps more spiritual.

Their need found an answer in the Greek divinities, who were imported into Rome and quickly identified with Latin gods, who were thus given a much greater interest and importance. Even Greek mysteries found a ready welcome in the colder and more sober climate of Rome. The orgiastic worship of Dionysus made such strides that the government found it necessary to suppress it in 186 B.C. in the interests of public order. Nor were these all. All the roads led to Rome, and all the gods came down them as well as men.

From Phrygia (Asia Minor) came the goddess Cybele, the Great Mother, and her lover Attis; this was during the Punic war, and under the stress of that momentous conflict this typically Oriental cult, whose priests castrated themselves as Attis was supposed to have done, secured a firm foothold in the capital and the great cities of the provinces.

Another divine immigrant was Mithras, the sun-god of the Persians; and Mithraism proved so popular that infant Christianity found in it a really dangerous rival. Initiates were baptized in the

blood of a sacrificed bull, and thereby were deemed to become candidates for eternal life. From one end of the empire to the other Mithraism had its devout believers. Soldiers in particular found it to answer their needs, and the remains of a Mithraic temple have been found on the Roman Wall where for four hundred years the legionaries guarded Britain from the assaults of the barbarian Scots and Picts, and guarded it well.

Then there was Isis, whose importation, with Osiris her spouse and Horus their infant son, was one of the earliest consequences of the incorporation of Egypt within the Roman realm.

These alien mysteries and divinities made a weighty contribution to Roman religion. To multitudes they brought a sense of communion with the powers that lie outside humanity, a comforting assurance that man was not the sport of an unkind and uncaring fate, a hope (if not a sure and certain confidence) of a joyful resurrection. All this was to the good, even though it may be supposed that the ethical importance of the Oriental influx was inconsiderable, or possibly negative. The native Roman religion brought some reinforcement to morality. It was the religion of the home, and emphasized all the homely virtues; it was the religion of the State, and that pinch of incense before the Emperor's bust that the early Christians found it impossible to offer was the symbol of a patriotic concern for the welfare of the empire, its rulers, and its people. But speaking generally, there was no necessary connection between Paganism and personal morality.

Religion of Philosophy. Very different was the Religion of Philosophy. This was the religion of the educated, of the thinking classes, who looked with an amused tolerance on the devotion that satisfied the masses, but for their own part turned with disdain from gods and goddesses who in their amours and much more culpable practices made the good man blush for shame. For a mythology which, however poetized, was still infantile and absurd beyond belief, the philosopher substituted the pursuit of Virtue.

When we moderns speak of philosophy, as likely as not we have in mind the unreadable tomes bearing the names of Kant or Hegel. But the earlier English usage included natural science under the name—there are still professors of Natural Philosophy in some of our universities—and in ancient days, so far from the term being confined to metaphysics and logic as it is now with us, it covered the whole fields of science and religion. It represented mental and spiritual cultivation. Cicero called it "the medicine of the soul,"

and Epicurus urged that no one should "delay to study philosophy while he is young, and when he is old let him not become weary of it; for no man can ever find the time unsuitable or too late to study the health of his soul." And Seneca wrote that Philosophy's function is to teach us to obey God and to follow Him, and to submit to Fortune; it is the art and law of life, teaching us what to do in all cases, and like good marksmen to hit the white at any distance; and moreover, the virtue that it enjoins is attainable by all the world, by freemen and by slaves, by the rich man and by the man pinched by poverty, by servants and exiles as by princes and kings.

If the official religions of Greece and Rome had little to do with ethics, the Religion of Philosophy had to do with very little else. It was the gospel of virtue. It brought to the serious-minded man the good news that a life of happiness can be lived here and now, in spite of all that men and fate may do and the fact that looming at the end of the road is the shrouded portal of death.

The first of the philosophers who combined religion with morals and metaphysics in a system designed to enable men to do right by God, their neighbours, and themselves, was the Greek Pythagoras, who in the sixth century B.C. travelled widely in the Eastern Mediterranean world and seems to have taught a philosophy in which one of the principal ideas was the transmigration of souls—an idea he may have got from India. Nothing has survived of his writings.

For the next two hundred years the philosophers were natural scientists rather than moralists, being more concerned with the discovery of the origin of matter and the universe at large than with the establishment of the principles that should direct the life of the reasoning and reasonable man. Socrates is remembered as being the first philosopher to connect virtue and knowledge, and still more as the first philosopher to die for his faith. Plato was a political theorist when he was not a mystic, but he declared the Golden Rule in the words, "May I do to others as I would that they should do to me." Aristotle was a scientist, the father of the encyclopædists, although he wrote more than one book on ethics. But towards the end of that same fourth century which contained the lives of these supreme intelligences we mark the rise of the two philosophical schools of Stoics and Epicureans which from that day to this have exercised the most powerful influence on human conduct. Nothing could be deader than ancient paganism. But

most thinking men are Stoics or Epicureans, or more usually a little bit of both.

Stoicism. Stoicism was founded by Zeno of Citium in Cyprus; he flourished about 300 B.C., and he must not be confused with the other Zeno who lived a hundred and fifty years earlier and bequeathed to the world the paradox of Achilles and the Tortoise. Zeno the Stoic may have been a Phœnician (i.e. a Semite) by birth, but he made his home in Athens, the metropolis of the Greek world, and taught any who liked to listen in the *Stoa Poikile*—hence the word “Stoic”—or Painted Porch in the market-place there. He was something of a natural philosopher, holding original views on the origin and destiny of the world; but he is primarily important as the framer of a system of ethics which has proved productive of one of the highest types of human excellence.

Perhaps “productive” is not quite the right word to use. Stoics are probably born and not made, and certainly the Romans were Stoics long before Zeno’s philosophy found general acceptance among them. What kind of philosophy a man takes up depends in the first instance on his physique, on what he has been given by Nature and received from his parents and ancestors. There have always been men who are by nature stern, unbending, upright in all their ways and serious in all their thoughts, men given to self-control and by no means averse from self-sacrifice in a cause that they have come to believe is right. There have always been men to whom Duty is the stern handmaiden of the voice of God—men who, though hard and unsympathetic in the ordinary intercourse of society, have risen to heights of heroic grandeur as the storm clouds have darkened the horizon and the tempest has engulfed them in its fury. Such men are drawn to the doctrines of Stoicism by an irresistible attraction. It provides them with a reason for what they do or want to do; and reason to the natural Stoic is all-important.

Such in particular were the ancient Romans. They were a proud and warlike people, born to be conquerors and finding in conquest their destined work. They loved discipline; and the discipline that won them the victory on so many a hard-fought field had its parallel in the absolute authority exercised by the State over the citizen, by the master over the slave, by the husband over the wife, by the parent over the child. They were valorous fighters. They never knew when they were defeated. They were patriotic to the core, finding their models of moral excellence in the great men and women of their own nation.

To the Stoic, Virtue was the supreme good; and whether he sat in the seats of the mighty or answered to the crack of the slave-owner's whip, he spent all the days of his life in its pursuit and practice. If asked to define Virtue he would have replied that it was harmony with Nature, the nature of man and the nature of the universe. It was by no means the same thing as happiness. A Stoic was bound to live the life of Virtue, and did so even in an age when, as the Roman historian Tacitus put it, "virtue was a sentence of death."

If it had to be summed up in one word, then "Duty" would probably be that word.

The Stoic strove to regulate his life by Reason; and Reason was the voice of the enlightened conscience that he carried within his bosom, and conscience seldom if ever failed to prompt him that Duty and Virtue are the same. The Stoic would have thrust aside with contempt the idea that a good man might be guided in his life by self-interest, since the sum of the interest of the units of society might be expected to add up to the good of the whole. "I do right, not because it is in my interest to do so," he would have proudly averred, "but because a voice within me tells me that what is my duty will also prove for me the highest good."

The men who answered thus were no impassioned fanatics, no ecstatic believers that this world is but a place in which souls are tried and sifted in preparation for a world of coming glory. Some of the Stoics held the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, at least in the modified form that the soul of the good man lives on in the realms of bliss until the next periodic conflagration of the world, when the universe shall be again renewed and started on its age-long path. Others of the sect thought with the Hindu philosophers that the human soul is a detached fragment of the parent soul that is the Deity, and that at death the fragment is reunited to the whole. Yet others were doubters, to whom the world of good men made perfect seemed reasonable enough when they turned the scrolls of Plato's writings, but faded into a misty dream when the roll was put back into its rack.

But whatever their belief or their disbelief, the Stoics would have scorned the idea that a good man should be influenced in his conduct by the hope of future reward or the fear of future punishment. The whole system of Stoic ethics, which carried self-sacrifice to a point that has probably never been equalled, and exercised an influence which has rarely been surpassed, was erected on the

foundation of the individual conscience. *There* and not in any world beyond the grave lay heaven and hell.

The writings of the Stoics are crowded with sentences in which this lofty belief finds proud expression. "Nothing for opinion, all for conscience," wrote Seneca, who also said that "No one is more virtuous than the man who sacrifices the reputation of a good man rather than sacrifice his conscience"; and again, that "A great man is not the less great when he lies vanquished and prostrate in the dust." The Younger Pliny once described a friend of his as a man "who did nothing for ostentation but all for conscience; who sought the reward of virtue in itself, and not in the praise of man." There we have the picture of a Stoic whom other Stoics would not have hesitated to acknowledge.

Epictetus. Stoicism was the creed, the philosophy of life, of many a noble character, and the universality of its appeal is illustrated by the emperor and the slave who, at the extremes of human fortune, bore witness that in their very different circumstances the same principles of conduct answered every need.

Epictetus was born in Asia Minor about A.D. 50, and he was a slave boy in Rome when St. Paul was living in his hired house in the imperial city. His master was Epaphroditus, one of Nero's freedmen, who is supposed to have treated him with a harshness that sometimes became downright barbarity. Once, we are told, he put the philosopher's leg in the rack: whereupon Epictetus, with great composure, and even managing a smile, remarked, "You will certainly break my leg." And when this happened, he continued in the same voice and vein, "Didn't I tell you that you would break it?" Possibly this ill-treatment was the cause of his lameness, but other authors assert that he was a cripple from youth, or attribute his disability to rheumatism. But ill words and blows were endured with characteristic equanimity. Only later in life was Epictetus manumitted, and even then he seems to have been driven into exile by the Emperor Domitian.

In life he can have had little that was easy and pleasant; he looked to death not as the doorway to a blissful future but as the end of all. Yet this poor, ill-treated victim of a vicious social system, this menial who was kicked about the house by a Roman brute, this old man who in the most straitened circumstances—in Rome his whole furniture consisted of a bed, a pipkin, and an earthen lamp—adopted a waif who otherwise would have been left to die by exposure, and gave a home to an old woman to nurse it—has left

behind him writings and an example which to multitudes in every succeeding age have seemed to attain the mountain-tops of human goodness.

In all things, he taught, men are in the hands of an all-wise Providence, a beneficent God. "Remember that you are an actor in a drama," he said once, "of such a kind as the author pleases to make it. • If short, of a short one; if long, of a long one. If it be his pleasure you should act a poor man, a cripple, a governor, or a private person, see that you act it naturally. For this is your business, to act well the character assigned you; to choose it is another's." ¹

"Never say of anything, 'I have lost it'; but 'I have restored it,'" was his counsel. "Is your child dead? It is restored. Is your wife dead? She is restored. Is your estate taken away? Well, and is not that likewise restored? 'But he who took it away is a bad man.' What is it to you by whose hands he, who gave it, hath demanded it back again? While he gives you to possess it, take care of it, but as of something not your own, as passengers do of an inn." ²

Here are some of his maxims, fragments of his teaching reverently remembered by those who listened to his words. (He wrote nothing, it may be remarked; but the lectures he delivered to pupils in his later years, and his *Enchiridion* or manual of philosophy, were taken down by his disciple Arrian and thus preserved.)

No one is free who doth not command himself.

It is the character of a wise man to resist pleasure, and of a fool to be enslaved by it.

If you were born in Persia, you would not endeavour to live in Greece, but to be happy in the place where you are. Why, then, if you are born in poverty, do you endeavour to be rich, and not to be happy in the condition where you are?

In briefest compass Epictetus's teaching may be expressed in two words which, we are told, he used to say should be taken to heart by every man who wished to be free from wrongdoing and to live a peaceful life. The two words were *anechou* and *apechou*, the Greek for "endure" and "abstain." Thereby, declared this one-time slave who ever retained intact and inviolate the proud fortress of his spirit, one may rise above external circumstances and make oneself their master.

Suicide. • When at nightfall Epictetus crept away to his pallet bed in some dark closet, and there summed up (as was his habit) the moral gains and losses of the day just ended, he must often have

¹ *Enchiridion of Epictetus*, xvii.

² *ibid.*, xi.

found comfort in the thought that no man need live longer than he himself wills.

Among the Romans, and the Stoics in particular, suicide was regarded not as with us as something cowardly, sordid, and shameful, but as the last resort of a noble spirit, the expression of a resolve to stand no more from man or fate. A nick with a knife, a prick with a bodkin, and the burden that has become too heavy to be borne is flung away. There was no fear of death in these bold spirits. They had no compunction over cutting short an existence that had grown unworthy. If they believed in a God, then they believed too that God would not require them to drag out their years in indignity and humiliation, in pain of body and infirmity of mind.

In a beautiful passage Epictetus bade his hearers remember that "the door is open. Do not be more fearful than children; but as they, when the play doth not please them, say, 'I will play no longer': so do you, in the same case say, 'I will play no longer,' and go. But if you stay, don't complain. . . ."

Seneca, too, looked on voluntary death as the final refuge of the intolerably miserable, the unbearably oppressed. "To death alone," he wrote, "it is due that life is not a punishment. I have one to whom I can appeal. I see before me crosses of many forms, the rack and the scourge, the instruments of torture adapted to every limb and every nerve. But I also see Death. She stands beyond my savage enemies, beyond my haughty fellow-countrymen. Slavery loses its bitterness, when by a step I can pass to liberty. Against all the injuries of life, I have the refuge of death." Life has one entry but many exits, he wrote in another passage; a man should seek the approbation of others in his life, but in the manner and time of his death he should please himself. "If life pleases you, live. If not, you have a right to return whence you came."

Many a Roman man and matron put into practice this teaching of the Stoic philosophers, and in their self-chosen and self-inflicted deaths were deemed to have been worthy of their virtuous lives.

Slavery and Brotherhood. Epictetus in his earlier years was a slave, and we might well have spared some of his philosophical discourses in exchange for only a little first-hand information of what it meant to be a slave in ancient Rome. As it is, the slave turned teacher tells us nothing of his experiences in servitude.

Ancient society rested on slavery, just as did the Southern States of the U.S.A. to within the memory of men still living. In the great cities the majority of the population may well have been

slaves; and there were many, too, in the countryside, working as domestics in the great houses and as labourers on the estates. Most of them, we may well believe, lived lives that were not too unhappy, but there is plenty of evidence to show that the lot of many was horribly harsh. Roman slaves were probably worse off than the Greek, with the possible exception of the unhappy people doomed to underground toil in the silver mines at Laurium. Both in Greece and Rome slaves were always put to the torture before their evidence was taken in lawsuits, since it was believed that otherwise they would not tell the truth. Slaves who were recaptured after a dash for liberty might be branded or put to death. A slave might own a little property, but only a little: his wife and children were his master's and not his. He might be bred to the plough or to the arena, in which he would be expected to display his prowess and possibly shed his life-blood in gladiatorial displays. In the last century of the Republic there were two great revolts of slaves in Sicily as well as the insurrection led by Spartacus, and these are evidence in themselves of the unbearable conditions prevailing on the great estates, the *latifundia*, of the south of Italy, which were worked by gangs of slaves housed and treated in a way that would have been deemed far too harsh and uneconomic for brute beasts.

Christian critics of the pagan society have often dilated on the horrors of ancient slavery, but it may in fairness be recalled that it is comparatively recently that the majority of Christians have discovered the incompatibility of slave-owning and the slave-trade with the Christian profession. On the other hand, there were many in ancient Rome who were seriously concerned over slavery's evils, and who strove long and earnestly and not unsuccessfully to make the life of the slave less humiliating and unhappy. Particularly were these to be found among the Stoics, whose doctrine of the native dignity of man told powerfully and inevitably against the enslavement of those who, whatever their race or their political opinions, whatever the heinousness of their crimes, were still men. "It is an error to think that servitude descends into the whole man," wrote Seneca; "the best part of him is exempt. Men's bodies may be subject and assigned to masters, but the mind remains independent. . . . It is the body which fortune gives over to a master—this he can buy and sell; but that inward part cannot be given in ownership." And again, "If all things are legally permissible against a slave, there are things which the common law of animate life forbids to be done against a man."

It was the philosophers who first grasped and gave expression to the idea of humanity as a whole—of all mankind as constituting a brotherhood undivided by race or language, colour or creed. Socrates boasted that he belonged to no one city, but to the world. Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, is reported to have planned a model State in which all men should look on all other men as fellow-citizens and countrymen, “observing one manner of life and kind of order, like a flock feeding together with equal rights in a common pasture.” Epictetus bade his followers: “Never, in reply to the question to what country you belong, say you are an Athenian or a Corinthian, but that you are a Cosmopolitan.” They were citizens of the world, he went on, just as surely as they were sons of God: “the greatest and highest and broadest community is that composed of men and God.”

When such was the language of the philosophers, it may be supposed that the institution of slavery would inevitably have undergone much modification; and indeed the whole weight of enlightened opinion was exerted in favour of manumissions, with such effect that there were frequent complaints that slaves were being freed faster than was consistent with the security and good order of the State. On the other hand, the early Church never called slavery into question at all: its ministers advised slaves to submit to their masters,¹ probably in the belief that Christ was returning to the world very shortly—within the lifetime of men then living—and that then there would be neither bond nor free. The Second Coming was delayed, but still the Church concerned itself hardly at all with the material welfare of the masses. The Christian emperors did nothing to mitigate the severity of the penal code, and it is not unfair to argue that if the reign of paganism had been prolonged, the philosophers might well have been more successful in lightening the load of human servitude than was in fact the all-powerful Christian Church throughout the Dark Ages.

Marcus Aurelius. A hundred years later than Epictetus lived the man who was to prove that Stoicism was as well suited to the courts of princes as to the homes and haunts of the lowlier orders of mankind.

The place of Marcus Aurelius in history is that of the philosopher-king, and he left behind him a little work which has long been regarded as a classic of the inner life. He had the good fortune to ascend the throne of the world's mightiest State in that period of the history

¹ e.g. St. Paul: “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling . . .” (Ephesians vi, 5). In this instance, as elsewhere in the New Testament, “slave” is translated “servant.”

of the world when, Gibbon declared, the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous.

To what extent that happiness and prosperity was due to the virtues of the man who at the age of thirty-nine succeeded the father of his adoption, Antoninus Pius, on the imperial throne, is impossible to determine; but all who were acquainted with Marcus bore witness to his severe and laborious virtue. His life, says Gibbon, was the noblest commentary on the principles of Zeno, whose rigid and rigorous system of philosophy he had embraced as a boy of twelve. "He was severe to himself, indulgent to the imperfections of others, just and beneficent to all mankind." He was absolutely devoid of malice, and it is on record that he once deplored the death of a conspirator who by committing suicide had deprived him of the pleasure of converting an enemy into a friend. War he detested as the disgrace and calamity of human nature, but he was no pacifist. On the contrary, he spent a number of successive winters on the Danube campaigning against the barbarians, and his end was hastened by the fatigues these military exertions induced in a frame that was never robust. He died in A.D. 180 after a reign of less than twenty years, but a century after his death there were many among the Roman people who still preserved his image in the little shrine that contained their household gods.

All-powerful master of millions of men, Marcus displayed a tender charity in all his words and works. Good Stoic that he was, he believed most firmly that vice springs from ignorance, and he was ever ready to make allowances for the feeble and the foolish, for the wicked and those who were only wrong. "Men were born for the service and benefit of each other," he wrote; "either teach them this obvious truth, or bear with their ignorance." If they do ill, it is because they do not know any better. Correct them if you can, by all means, he would say; but when you are weary or impatient, remember how the immortal gods have had to endure without anger, and even to surround with blessings, so many and such wicked men. "My good sir," he told himself, "perform to the best of your ability what Nature requires of you, and don't look round for applause or to see if anyone observes you. Neither expect nor hope to realize Plato's imaginary commonwealth, but be contented if the world goes tolerably well, and count the smallest improvement as something gained. . . ."

Fate or the will of God made Marcus Aurelius a despot, but he had none of that peculiar vice of the despot, the determination to

force humanity into the mould he thinks the most worthy and desirable. He was in very truth the epitome of tolerance.

Yet he persecuted the Christians? This indeed may be laid to his account, and surprise has been frequently expressed that one of the best men who have ever sat on a throne should have failed so signally to appreciate the virtues of the Christian life, let alone the truth of the Christian creed. Of the reasons which induced him to issue his persecuting edicts we know nothing, and the text of the edicts has not been preserved. Certainly it was not any ferocity of disposition, nor any such religious fanaticism as has inspired so many a Christian ruler in the persecution of his non-Christian, or Christian but unorthodox, subjects. But it may be recalled that the early Christians believed most firmly in the rapidly approaching end of the world, and that the end of the world was identified by the apocalyptic writers with the end of the Roman Empire. "No term of insult was too gross for the Christians to apply to Imperial Rome," wrote J. A. Farrer in his "*Paganism and Christianity*." "They habitually spoke of her, in a literature of foolish visions scattered broadcast over the empire, as Babylon, the Harlot, or the Beast, and they omitted no imaginary evil from the pictures they drew of her impending ruin." The age of the Antonines was particularly rich in forged prophetic writings predicting the end of the Empire; "and every impartial mind must admit not only that the Pagans must have been more than men to have borne these menaces with patience, but that the Roman magistrates would have been political imbeciles had they looked on nascent Christianity, formed largely of Jews in the different cities of the empire, as other than a hostile political force, and an association or conspiracy of more than usual danger to the State."¹ On this view the Christians were persecuted by Marcus, as by some of his predecessors and successors, not on religious grounds but on account of their political opinions—opinions which were held to be by those in authority (and surely not on altogether inadequate grounds) to be treasonable and threatening the security and continued existence of the Empire.

It is difficult to see on what other grounds the Christians might be persecuted. The religious policy of the emperors and the senate says Gibbon, "was happily seconded by the reflections of the enlightened, and by the habits of the superstitious part of their subjects. The various modes of worship which prevailed in the

¹ *Paganism and Christianity*, p. 141.

Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true; by the philosopher as equally false; and by the magistrate as equally useful. And thus toleration produced not only mutual indulgence, but even religious concord.”¹

Perhaps it may be added that the persecutions of the Christians in ancient Rome were few in number, limited in extent, and lasted for but a short time. The popular belief, fostered by sectarian propaganda, that thousands of Christians were flung to the lions or put to the sword to make a Roman holiday in the great amphitheatres, is false. Religious persecution is a Christian crime, not a pagan vice.

Epicureanism. The rival system of philosophy to Zeno’s was founded by Epicurus, who was born in 341 B.C., the son of an Athenian schoolmaster living in the island of Samos. He removed in 306 to Athens, where he established a school of philosophy and wrote some three hundred treatises, all of which have perished, and he died in 270 in the seventy-second year of his age.

Epicurus was a scientist as well as a philosopher; but here we are concerned not with his physics but with his ethics. He held that pleasure is the sole good, pain the sole evil; and his whole scheme of morality is summed up in four canons.

The pleasure which produces no pain is to be embraced.

The pain which produces no pleasure is to be avoided.

The pleasure is to be avoided which prevents a greater pleasure, or produces a greater pain.

The pain is to be endured which averts a greater pain, or secures a greater pleasure.

Just as there are born Stoics, so there are men to whom the principles of Epicureanism come as second nature—men of easy temper and amiable disposition, benevolent and tolerant, despisers of exaggeration, averse to enthusiasm, opponents of mysticism and superstition, consistent in inconsistency, always seeking the easiest way, ready to live and let live, and resolved on nothing so much as to make the best of both worlds so far as they possibly can.

Such characters were not at home in the Roman mental and moral climate: for them Greece was a far more favourable environment. But it should be remarked that the founder was not at all a typical example of what Epicureanism has come to mean.

By all accounts Epicurus was a man of the most blameless character, exceedingly conscientious and abstemious in all his ways.

¹ *Decline and Fall*, Ch. 2.

His "pleasure" was not the gratification of the lecher and the wine-bibber, but the rational satisfaction of a healthy mind in a healthy body. He taught that bodily pains might be subdued by mental pleasures remembered or anticipated. He advocated an almost ascetic plainness of living: over the gate of the garden in Athens where he taught his pupils was inscribed a warning to those who might wish to enter his classes, that they must expect no better fare than barley cakes and water. "When we say that pleasure is the end of life," runs one of the few fragments of his teaching that have come down to us, "we do not have in mind the pleasures of the debauchee or the sensualist, as some from ignorance or malignity represent, but freedom of the body from pain, and of the soul from anxiety. For it is not prolonged drinkings and revelings, nor the society of women, nor rare viands and other luxuries of the table, but sober contemplation that searches out the grounds of preference and avoidance and banishes those chimeras that harass the mind."

Chief of those chimeras are fear of the gods and fear of death. As to the first, he did not deny the existence of the gods, but he maintained that as "happy and imperishable beings" they were very unlikely to concern themselves with human affairs. And as to death, this means the end of the soul as well as of the body. But why worry, "since when we are, death is not; and when death is, we are not." Death is nothing either to the living or to the dead, for to the former it is not near, and the latter are no longer in existence and so can know nothing about it.

The teaching of the Epicurean school is concisely summarized in the words (twelve in Greek) which the Epicurean Diogenes of Oenoanda in Lycia inscribed in a cloister:

Nothing to fear in God. Nothing to feel in Death. Good can be attained. Evil can be endured.

Among the Romans the most distinguished of the Epicureans was Lucretius, whose great poem, *De Rerum Natura*, is saturated with Epicurean philosophy and has recommended it to generations of thoughtful souls. The school could also number among its disciples such great names as Horace, Atticus the friend of Cicero, and Pliny the Younger. Even Seneca, who was nominally a Stoic, drew much of his inspiration from the teaching of the rival school.

Woman in Classical Society. In ancient Greece women were sometimes enrolled among the pupils of philosophers, and there were women who achieved prominence as scholars, poets, and

painters. But in Athens at least the woman who sought to go outside her own home was regarded as being not quite respectable. "A free woman should be bounded by the street door," says one of Menander's characters. Pericles' ideal of a good woman was one who was "not talked about for good or for evil among men." Euripides puts into the mouth of the tragic and long-suffering Medea a moving expression of the age-long protest of the weaker against the stronger sex:

Of all things that have life and sense we women are most wretched. For we are compelled to buy with gold a husband who is also—worst of all!—the master of our person. And on his character, good or bad, our whole fate depends. For divorce is regarded as a disgrace to a woman, and she cannot repudiate her husband. Then coming as she does into the midst of manners and customs strange to her, she would need the gift of divination—unless she has been taught at home—to know how best to treat her bedfellow. And if we manage so well that our husband remains faithful to us, and does not break away, we may think ourselves fortunate; if not, there is nothing for it but death. A man when he is vexed at home can go out and find relief among his friends or acquaintances; but we women have none to look to but him. They tell us we live a sheltered life at home while they go to the wars; but that is nonsense. For I would rather go into battle thrice than bear a child once.¹

There *were* free women in Athens, women who had the disposal of their own bodies, the management of their own lives. But they were not respectable and honoured matrons and mothers, but the more or less loose-living *hetairai* and the professional whores or *pornai*. The former in particular constituted the cultured element in feminine society. They were well-read. They could talk intelligently. They had pleasant manners and had cultivated the art of making love. Their salons were the resort of the more literary-minded males, both bachelor and married, and professional philosophers found it not inconsistent with their dignity to be found in their company. Perhaps the most famous of these courtesans who were also blue-stockings was Aspasia, whose beauty and genius secured her the passionate love of the great Pericles, who made her his lifelong companion. Others more celebrated for their beauty than for their intelligence were Lais, the model of the painter Apelles, and Phryne, whose naked loveliness won her acquittal when she was arraigned before the judges on a charge of violating the Eleusinian mysteries. Socrates himself was more than an acquaintance of the courtesan named Theodota. Xenophon, in his "Memorabilia of Socrates," tells us that the philosopher saw her

¹ Euripides, *Medea*; Davies and Vaughan trans.

first posing in the nude for her portrait; he thanked her for having revealed her beauty, and went on to give her some shrewd advice on how to excite an appetite in her lovers and keep that appetite from becoming cloyed.

In Rome manners were inclined to be stricter than in Athens, but Roman women enjoyed an amount of freedom that their Greek sisters might have envied. The Roman housewife had the honourable title of *domina* and was expected to be the companion of her husband—which the Athenian lady seldom was or could aspire to be. Under the Empire there was (if the poets and chroniclers may be believed) a general loosening of the marriage-tie and a widespread demoralization. Female turpitude is a favourite subject with the satirists, and so too is female folly such as the affected taste for learning and philosophy that was professed by some. Horace pilloried the ladies “among whose silken pillows Stoic pamphlets loved to nestle.”

But on the other hand this same age was productive of the noblest examples of Roman womanhood. When Seneca was condemned by Nero to take his own life, his wife opened her own veins so as to accompany her husband to the grave; and though her servants stopped the bleeding and compelled her to live, the pallor that henceforth marked her countenance was regarded as a most honourable evidence of her devotion. Even more famous is Arria, wife of Cæcina Pætus, who, when he was ordered by Claudius to kill himself, “taught her husband how to die,” stabbing herself first and then handing him the bloody dagger with the words, “My Pætus, it doesn’t hurt.” Many other Roman wives and mothers showed an equal heroism, an equal love; and the medallions carved on Roman sarcophagi, showing husband and wife each with an arm flung fondly over the shoulder of the other, is the answer to those who would have us believe that Imperial Rome was a sink of iniquity in which the most intimate relation of man and woman had been reduced to nothing but lust.

If any of the great writers of antiquity, Seneca or Cicero or Marcus Aurelius, could come to life again and read the accepted descriptions of the world in which they played a distinguished and honourable part, they might be expected to protest against the absence of balance, of a just and proper sense of proportion. They might say that we have depended too long and too largely on the tittle-tattle of keyhole-peepers and eavesdroppers, on the prejudiced accounts of men who saw in Paganism the deadly enemy

of their own struggling creed. They would remind us of the lives of the good and great, and of the unchronicled and unremembered multitude, which testify to the moral value of the Religion of Philosophy. And if they offered for our consideration a summary of that religion in a single sentence, it might well be the maxim that Marcus Aurelius wrote one night after hours of toil at running the affairs of a world: "Love mankind, and be resigned to Providence."

CHAPTER V

HINDUISM

HINDUISM is the religion of more than one-half of the total population of the British Commonwealth and Empire—of more than two hundred and fifty million Hindus, living in the hundred cities and the half-million villages of the sub-continent of India.

It is the oldest of the living religions of the world—so old that it is impossible to discover its origins, although its historic records date back more than four thousand years. It has no common creed or set of dogmas universally held. It has no one philosophical system. It has no pope, no college of cardinals, no bench of bishops. It has no uniformity of worship. It has no Bible. It is therefore extraordinarily difficult to define and to describe.

To many, writes Professor Sir S. Radhakrishnan, the distinguished Indian philosopher, in "The Hindu View of Life," Hinduism seems to be a name without any content. Is it a museum of beliefs, a medley of rites, or a mere map, a geographical expression? Its content, if it has any, has altered from age to age, from community to community. It has meant different things at different periods; it means different things to-day to its present-day believers. Some have called it an encyclopædia of religions rather than a religion. It is more a way of life than a form of thought. "While it gives absolute liberty in the world of thought, it enjoins a strict code of practice. The theist and the atheist, the sceptic and the agnostic, may all be Hindus if they accept the Hindu system of culture and life." What counts is conduct, not belief, he declares; and another Hindu writer says that so long as a Hindu conforms to the customs and practices of his society he may believe what he likes.

To quote Professor Radhakrishnan again, Hinduism is "not a definite dogmatic creed, but a vast, complex, but subtly unified mass of spiritual thought and realization." Through the ages "its tradition of the godward endeavour of the human spirit has been continuously enlarging," so that "Hinduism has come to be a tapestry of the most variegated tissues and almost endless diversity of hues." Let us look at some of the tissues that have gone to make up the tapestry.

The Vedas. Although India has more than five hundred spoken languages and dialects, she has only one sacred language and one sacred literature. That language is Sanskrit (now as dead as Latin), and that literature is the scriptures of Hinduism, composed in poetry and prose and comprising theology, philosophy, law, and mythology, but almost no history. For hundreds of years this literature was not written but spoken, being handed down from teacher to teacher, sage to disciple, in an unbroken chain.

A large part of this body of scripture, the part that is most ancient and most deeply revered, is believed by Hindus to have had no human author, but to be a direct communication from Brahma, the Supreme Being. This part is the Vedas (sacred knowledge or science), which is divided into three portions: the Mantra portion (inspired speech or sacred text); the Brahmana portion (explaining the relationship of the Mantras and the sacred ceremonies); and the Upanishads (mystical or secret doctrine, usually intended to be kept from those who have not finished with the world and have not reached spiritual maturity).

There are five main collections or *Samhitas* of the Mantra portion, viz.:

- Rigveda, or Veda of hymns and praises;
- Samaveda, or Veda of tunes and chants;
- Yajurveda, or Veda of prayers and sacrificial formulas, contained in two samhitas, the Black and the White Yajus;
- Atharvaveda, or Veda of the Atharvans.

Of these, the samhita of the Rigveda (*ric* = verse) is the oldest and most important; it has been claimed that it is the oldest existing literary work, unless the Egyptian Book of the Dead is to be regarded as a literary composition. It consists of 1,028 hymns, some of which may have been sung or chanted by the Aryans before they established themselves in India, 1500 or 2000 years before Christ. They were collected about 1000 B.C., i.e. approximately contemporaneous with the Homeric Age of Greece.

The Samaveda consists mainly of hymns of the Rigveda arranged for chanting. The Yajurveda contains not only hymns but sacrificial formulas for the use of one of the orders of Aryan priests, the chanters (or "praise-singers"), while the Atharvaveda is similarly intended as a textbook for the priests who offered the sacrifices.

Orientalists have devoted immense pains to the study of these ancient writings, and from their linguistic researches in particular they have been able to picture something of the social conditions

of the people among whom the Rigveda originated between three and four thousand years ago. Thus it is ascertained that they were organized in tribes, and followed a pastoral-nomad existence in a wide region of grasslands far removed from the sea. They had oxen, sheep, and goats—also the horse, which served them well in their hunting and in their wars, for they were wont to fight, it seems, in defence of their possessions, and probably were not above raiding their neighbours or the more settled folk whose territories abutted on their hunting-grounds. They were almost certainly acquainted with the simpler processes of cereal agriculture; they had names for some of the forest trees which they felled, using the timber to make their wheeled carts and rude dwellings. In these huge lumbering waggons they moved through a world in which there were as yet no roads, or even well-defined paths and trackways. The first migrants blazed the trail for those who came after in ever-increasing numbers; and it was in this fashion (suggested Prof. J. L. Myres, though the idea is scouted by some other modern scholars) that the notion of a Way, a route beset with difficulties and dangers and leading from the accustomed to the strange and unknown, was burnt into the consciousness of the Aryan peoples. So all-absorbing was the idea, so dominating was it over the life they lived for years and generations, that in course of time it was introduced into their moral musings, their philosophical dreamings, so that, not in one great Oriental religion only, "the Way" became a symbol of man's onward struggle and upward striving, of a journey towards a state of personal goodness and individual happiness that is more elusive and difficult to reach than the distant mountains seen dimly through the dust and haze.

In course of time one wing of what must have been a vast migratory movement descended from the grasslands through the passes of the Himalayas on to the plains of north-western India. There they found a permanent home, securing a predominance over the native inhabitants that their descendants have never lost.

Until only the other day it was generally believed that these pre-Aryan inhabitants of India were on an altogether lower level of civilization than their Aryan conquerors, who pictured them as black-skinned and flat-nosed barbarians. But Sir John Marshall's excavations of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa in the Indus basin have changed all that. Five thousand years ago, before ever the Aryans were heard of south of the Himalayas, the Punjab and Sind, and possibly other parts of India as well, possessed an

advanced and singularly uniform civilization of their own, closely resembling and in some respects even superior to the civilizations of the contemporary Mesopotamia and Egypt.

This Indus civilization is dated by Sir John Marshall about 3250 B.C. It was one of large cities and towns, with solidly-built brick houses and excellent sanitation. The people were wealthy traders, living lives of settled comfort very different from the nomadic existence of the Aryans who dispossessed them. Their religion, too, was in marked contrast to that of the Aryans, for they had deities in the form of images or idols, a number of which have been disinterred, whereas the religion of the Aryans as revealed in the Vedic poems is the worship of the elementary powers of Nature.

Gods of the Aryans. There was a triad of the most important Aryan deities, composed of Agni, the god of fire; Indra, the god of the air; and Surya, the sun, regarded in the Vedic theology, as in that of the Greeks and Romans, as the source of heat, of generation, and of growth. Then there were Ushas, the dawn, and Maruts, the wind; Dyaus, the sky, the Indian equivalent of the Greek Zeus and the Roman Jupiter; and closely associated with him, the goddess Aditi, the infinite expanse, subsequently conceived of as the mother of all the gods. There was another goddess with whom Dyaus was supposed to have union—Prithivi, “the broad one” or the earth; and this marriage of sky and earth is an early example, perhaps the earliest, of the fecund conjunction of the male and female principles. As we shall see, this is an idea that runs like an endless thread through the pattern of Hindu thought and life.

Finally, we may mention Varuna, mainly a god of the waters, but also a moral deity, who keeps a strict eye on men’s behaviour and punishes them when they have done wrong, but is not slow to forgive and forget when they approach him with contrite heart. Here is a verse from a Vedic hymn translated by Sir M. Monier-Williams:

The mighty Varuna, who rules above, looks down
Upon these worlds, his kingdom, as if close at hand.
When men imagine they do aught by stealth, he knows it.
No one can stand, or walk, or softly glide along,
Or hide in dark recess, or lurk in secret cell,
But Varuna detects him, and his movements spies.
Two persons may devise some plot, together sitting,
And think themselves alone; but he, the king, is there—
A third—and sees it all. His messengers descend

Countless from his abode, for ever traversing
 This world, and scanning with a thousand eyes its inmates.
 Whate'er exists within this earth, and all within the sky,
 Yea, all that is beyond, king Varuna perceives.
 The winkings of men's eyes are numbered all by him;
 He wields the universe as gamesters handle dice.¹

Another of the hymns in the Rigveda runs:

If we have sinned against the man who loves us, have ever wronged
 a brother, friend, or comrade,
 The neighbour ever with us, or a stranger, O Varuna, remove from
 us the trespass.
 If we, as gamesters cheat at play, have cheated, done wrong
 unwittingly or sinned of purpose,
 Cast all these sins away like loosened fetters, and, Varuna, let us be
 thine own beloved.²

These were the chief gods of the Aryans, and they were very different, it would seem, from the gods of the peoples of pre-Aryan India, with whom it was a matter of the heathen in his blindness bowing down to wood and stone. Yet the triumphant Aryans did not sneer at the crude creations of the conquered. There was a process of give-and-take in the religious intercourse, so that much of present-day Hinduism would appear to be a survival of the pre-Aryan faith. In particular, phallic worship, which the Rigveda condemns, but which, as evidenced by some of the images that have been recovered by the archæologists, was rife in the Indus cities, was perpetuated and has continued to form a prominent feature of Indian religion down the ages.

Gods and philosophies and ceremonies were one and all welcomed into the great, broad, friendly bosom of Brahmanism, as this early stage of Hinduism is called. Nothing was too sublime or too degraded, nothing too spiritual or too gross. Two things only were required of the believer: he should find his place in the system of Caste that the Aryans imposed on India, and should accept the supremacy of the Brahman order, the highest and most exclusive caste of all.

The Four Great Castes. The origins of the Caste System are not to be discovered with any degree of certainty, but it may be supposed that caste was in the main a kind of colour-bar intended by the Aryan conquerors to mark themselves off from the non-Aryan population they had subjugated. The Aryans called themselves the twice-born, having in mind the second or spiritual birth symbolized by

¹ Sir M. Monier-Williams, *Hinduism* (1894), p. 28.

² *Hindu Scriptures*, ed. Nicol MacNicol (Dent, Everyman Library), p. 19.

the sacrament of investiture with the sacred cord at the age of puberty. In course of time the twice-born came to be divided into three main classes: a priestly and learned class called Brahmins, a ruling military or warrior class called Kshatriyas, and an agricultural and trading class called Vaisyas. Beneath all these in the social scale were the Sudras, the once-born, who may be identified with the aboriginal inhabitants of the Indian peninsula.

To account for the inequality of rank imposed and perpetuated by the institution of caste, an inequality of origin was postulated. As an ancient writer put it, the Brahmins proceeded from the head of the human prototype or Brahma himself, the Kshatriyas from his arms, the Vaisyas from his belly, and the Sudras from his feet.

The duties and obligations of these four main castes are described and defined in the Code of Manu, which is believed to have been put together in the first century of our era, although the laws and customs of which it is composed almost certainly existed at a considerably earlier date. Thus the Sudra is to be the universal servant; the Vaisya is to till the soil and conduct the primitive trading arrangements of the time; the Kshatriya is to guard and maintain the State and execute the laws that the Brahman, the lawgiver and priest, draws up and interprets.

The Brahmins. Because he is born into the highest of the four great castes, and because the caste to which he belongs is held to have derived from the most honourable portion of Brahma's frame; because furthermore he "possesses the Veda," i.e. enjoys the right of repeating, teaching, and expounding the sacred scriptures (whereas the Kshatriyas and the Vaisyas may only read them, and the Sudras may not do even that), the Brahman is the lord of Indian society. He is the chosen servant of the divinity; nay more, he is himself a part of the divinity.

As originally laid down by Manu, every Brahman had to pass through four conditions or stages of life, i.e. his life was divided into four periods: when he became a student; when he became a married householder, and as soon as possible a parent; when he renounced the world and retired to the jungle with his wife; and when in the evening of his days he became an anchorite or religious devotee, concerned no more with the things of the flesh but devoted entirely to spiritual contemplation and religious exercises. These were the main turning-points in his earthly pilgrimage, and each was marked by rites and ceremonies of one kind and another that he was bound to perform.

Perhaps the most vivid and detailed account of the Brahman caste or order is that of the Abbé Dubois (1765-1848), that very remarkable Frenchman who for more than thirty years laboured as a Roman Catholic missionary among the Indian people, "living like them and becoming all but a Hindu myself," so that "by being made all things to all men I might by all means save some." In the preface to his masterly piece of social reporting, "Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies," the first English edition of which was published in 1816, he spoke of the high esteem in which the Brahman caste hold themselves, and of the distant hauteur with which they treat the common people, of the hate and contempt they harbour against all strangers, particularly Europeans, and the jealous care with which they hide from the profane the mysteries of their religious system, the records of their learning, and the privacy of their homes. But the Abbé, who made it a constant rule to live as the Indians lived, who adopted their dress and followed so far as possible their customs and methods of life, even taking care to avoid any marked display of repugnance to those of their practices that he found most abhorrent, succeeded in penetrating the barriers of Brahmanical reserve. And, since society in India is cast in a firm and enduring mould that the centuries hardly change, his descriptions are said by competent authorities to be still as true to-day in every essential particular as when they were penned a hundred and thirty years ago.

In one passage Dubois draws an acute comparison between the manners and customs of the Brahmans and those of the Pharisees as described in the New Testament. (Both classes, it may be admitted, have suffered from unsympathetic reporters.) Their lives were full of the same affectations, he says; they shared the same dread of defilement; there were the same continual ablutions and bathings, the same scrupulous attention to the outward observance of the religious law, the same frequent pride, etc.; and all was tainted by just such overweening ostentation and hypocrisy that was so roundly condemned by Jesus. In particular the Brahmans whom the Abbé met in the course of his lengthy travels were men of violent passions, quick to resent injury and eager for revenge, rancorous in their controversies and intensely selfish. He accuses them of licentiousness and homosexuality. But they were naturally cunning, wily, double-tongued, and servile, and were not slow in turning these undesirable qualities to account by insinuating themselves into the courts of the native princes and the offices of the British



SIVA AND PARVATI

A fresco from the Ajanta caves in the Indian state of Hyderabad, popularly supposed to represent the third member of the Hindu Triad and his spouse.

Government and of the East India Company which then, and for many years afterwards, managed the commercial relations of the country. • In these positions they were brought into the closest connection with Europeans, yet there was no real friendship or esteem on the Brahmans' part for the race who provided them with employment, influence, and opportunities for acquiring wealth.

How can there be, asks the Abbé, as long as Europeans continue to eat the flesh of the sacred cow, which a Hindu considers a much more heinous offence than eating human flesh? How can there be, when Europeans have pariahs or outcasts as their domestic servants, and sometimes have immoral relations with them, whereas a Brahman must purify himself by bathing if but the shadow of one of these pariahs is thrown across him? How can he feel well-disposed towards Europeans when he sees them giving way to drunkenness, which to him is the most disgusting of vices, and sees their wives on terms of the most intimate familiarity with their husbands, being equally intemperate, and eating, drinking, laughing, and joking with other men, and, above all, dancing with them—he in whose presence a wife dare not even sit, and to whom it is inconceivable that any woman, unless she be a concubine or a prostitute, could ever think of indulging in such pastimes? And how, again, could he mix with people whose clothing, which to him seems to savour of indecency since it shows too much of the human form, comprises so many articles, e.g. boots, shoes, gloves, made from the skins of animals, when he cannot understand how any decent man can handle, wear, or even touch these remains of dead animals without shuddering with disgust? ¹

Such were the men whom the Abbé Dubois lived among for so many years, far removed from the world in which his fellow-countrymen were streaming triumphantly across Europe in Napoleon's wake—lived among and wrestled with for the souls of the Indian people. Not very successfully, it would appear, since he tells us that, during the long period in which he lived as a missionary in India, he made only between two and three hundred converts of both sexes; and of these two-thirds were Pariahs or beggars, while most of the rest were Sudras, outcasts, etc., who turned Christian chiefly for the purpose of marriage or with other interested views. Certainly he made little or no impression on the Brahmans. They feared his competition so little that they were tolerant—this is

¹ *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, trans. and ed. by Henry K. Beauchamp, C.I.E. (O.U.P. 1906), p. 305.

one virtue that he allows them—so tolerant that they granted him land on which to erect his chapels, and often expressed a polite regard for the sublime principles of Christian morality.

A hundred years after the Abbé Dubois had left India and gone back to Paris—where he lived for another twenty-five years until his death, in the “year of revolutions”—the American writer, Mrs. Katharine Mayo (whose book, “Mother India,” has been so frequently and vehemently assailed, and as often and strongly defended), buttonholed a citizen of Madras, a man rich, respected, and politically powerful, yet withal of a low caste. “Will you draw me your picture of a Brahman?” she asked, and this is his reply:¹

Once upon a time, when all men lived according to their choice, the Brahman was the only fellow who applied himself to learning. Then, having become learned, and being by nature subtle-minded, he secretly laid hold upon the sacred books and secretly wrote into those books false texts that declared him, the Brahman, to be lord over all the people. Ages passed. And gradually, because the Brahman only could read and because he gave out his false texts that forbade learning to others, the people grew to believe him the Earthly God he called himself and to obey him accordingly. So in all Hindu India he ruled the spirit of man, and none dared dispute him, not till England came with schools for all.

Now, here in this province, Madras, we fight the Brahman. But he is still very strong, because the might of thousands of years breaks slowly, and he is as shrewd as a host of demons. He owns the Press, he sways the Bench, he holds 80 per cent. of the public offices, and he terrorizes the people, especially the women. For we are all superstitious and mostly illiterate. The “Earthly God” has seen to that. Also, he hates the British, because they keep him from strangling us. He makes much “patriotic” outcry, demanding that the British go. And we—we know that if they go now, before we have had time to steady ourselves, he will strangle us again and India will be what it used to be, a cruel despotism wielded by fat priests against a mass of slaves, because our imaginations are not yet free from him.

Each Hindu, went on the Madras business man, pays to the Brahman in religious dues much more than he pays to the State in taxation. From the day of his birth to the day of his death, a man must be feeding the “Earthly God.” A Brahman must be paid when a child is born, when it is sixteen days old, when it is named, when it begins to eat solids, when it takes its first steps, on its birthday, when its education begins, when it is betrothed, and when puberty comes. The Brahman must be paid at an eclipse. And so it goes on, until the man who has supported the Brahman throughout

¹ Katherine Mayo, *Mother India* (Cape), pp. 114-116.

his life now lies dead. But he has not finished paying. His corpse may not be removed from the house until the Brahman has had his fee, and at the cremation and after it more dues are dropped into the outstretched hand of the Brahman. And every month for a year the dead man's son must hold a feast for Brahmans, and give them clothes and ornaments. For whatever a Brahman eats and drinks and wears is enjoyed by the dead. . . . All such ceremonies are part of the Brahman's vested rights, to neglect which is to court damnation in the next world.

The Brahmanas. For more, very much more, than two thousand years the Brahmans have controlled the bodies and held in thrall the consciences of the untold millions of Hindus. Only once in all that vast period has their supremacy been seriously threatened, and that was following what is called the Brahmana period of Hinduism, probably from 800 to 500 B.C., when the Brahmanas, the second main division of the Vedic writings, constituted the principal scriptures of the Indian people.

The Brahmanas, as their name implies, are intended primarily for Brahmans, and they may be described as manuals for the direction of the complicated ritual that had superseded the simple worship of the first Vedic period, and for which a specialized and skilled priesthood was obviously necessary.

While the poets of the Rigveda were largely content to glorify the visible manifestations of the gods, their successors who were responsible for the Brahmanas introduced a markedly ethical note, dilating on the virtues that the divinities displayed and were thus recommended for imitation by their worshippers. At the same time there is discernible a tendency to give to one of the elementary Powers a supremacy over the rest. Clearly the nature of the Divine was the subject of intense speculation.

The Upanishads. The period at which we have now arrived—some five or six hundred years B.C.—was one of great intellectual stir throughout the civilized world. Buddha arose in India, Pythagoras in Greece, Zoroaster in Persia, Jeremiah in Jerusalem, and Confucius in China. Men were in a questioning mood, deeply concerned with the problems that have perplexed and still perplex the minds of all who think and feel.

Much of the fruit of this mental ferment, this philosophical theorizing, this religious yearning, is enshrined in the ancient writings that constitute the third principal division of the Hindu scriptures—the Upanishads. The word means "secret doctrines,"

or something that cannot be seen immediately but lies below the surface. Only the educated and the enlightened can be expected to appreciate and understand the Upanishads, and they are the only part of the Veda which is much studied and appealed to by the intellectual classes.

Some 150 Upanishads have been preserved, treatises written mostly in prose but occasionally in verse. One of the most important and interesting is the Isa Upanishad, and Sir M. Monier-Williams gives a translation of part of it as providing a good example of the pantheistic doctrines of Brahmanism which emerge in this portion of the Indian sacred literature.

Whate'er exists within this universe
Is all to be regarded as enveloped
By the great Lord, as if wrapped in a vesture.
There is only one Being who exists
Unmoved, yet moving swifter than the mind;
Who far outstrips the senses, though as gods
They strive to reach him; who himself at rest
Transcends the fleetest flight of other beings;
Who, like the air, supports all vital action.
He moves, yet moves not; he is far, yet near;
He is within this universe. Whoe'er beholds
All living creatures as in him and him—
The Universal Spirit—as in all,
Henceforth regards no creature with contempt.¹

This conception of Brahma as the only real Being in the universe, and indeed constituting the universe, is the basic dogma of the Upanishad teaching. For the rest, the philosophy is summed up by Monier-Williams under six heads:

1. The eternity of the soul, both retrospectively and prospectively. The supreme universal soul (*Brahma*), and the personal individual soul (*Atmān*) of living beings, have always existed and must ever exist.

2. The eternity of the matter or substance out of which the universe has been evolved. (The Hindu philosopher is firmly convinced of the truth of the old adage, *ex nihilo nihil fit*—nothing can be produced out of nothing.)

3. The soul, though itself abstract thought and knowledge, can only exercise thought, consciousness, sensation, and cognition, and indeed can only act and will when connected with external objects of sensation, invested with some bodily form, and joined to mind.

¹ Monier-Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

4. The union of soul and body is productive of bondage, and, in the case of human souls, of misery.

5. In order to accomplish the working out of the consequences, or ripenings of acts (*Karma*), the soul must be removed to a place of reward or punishment, which reward or punishment, however, is neither full and effectual nor final. (For in the Hindu system the heavens are only steps on the road to final beatitude, and the hells, though places of terrible torture, are merely temporary purgatories.)

6. The transmigration of the soul, through an innumerable succession of bodies, is the true explanation of the existence of evil in the world.¹

These are the six essential elements of the Brahmanical philosophy, and Monier-Williams concludes that their one great aim is to teach men to abstain from action of every kind, good or bad. For actions are fetters on the embodied soul, and until these fetters have been shaken off the soul cannot attain the only real, the supreme bliss, the loss of repeated individual existences and absorption into the Being who is pure life, pure thought, pure joy.

Transmigration and Karma. Belief in the transmigration of souls—not reincarnation, strictly speaking, for that implies a succession of lives in human form, whereas transmigration operates not only in this way but through animal and vegetable existences, and even extends to material substances, rocks, stones, etc.—is one of the two basic beliefs, the central concepts, of Hindu theology.

"It is a strange, compelling theory," writes Sir George MacMunn, "this eternal migration of souls in an 'inner circle,' going round and round, getting out at this station or that, being bundled back in the train as you want to get out, the journey going on to the ages, unless you can find the secret way to the lift that will take you to the cool air above."²

The other fundamental dogma is *Karma* (action)—the belief that what a man sows that shall he also reap, that a man's state or condition in any particular life is determined by what he did in his previous lives. Taken together, the two dogmas provide the most powerful support to practical morality, as an incentive to virtue and a deterrent from vice.

When a soul is "broken off" from the Supreme Spirit, when it starts on its ages-long journey as a separate being, it is under the form of one of the vilest insects, and rises little by little in the course

¹ Monier-Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-52.

² *Religions and Hidden Cults of India* (Sampson Low), p. 28.

of millions of years to the condition of man. After death the souls of men go to animate other bodies, sometimes the body of an insect, sometimes of a bird, a four-legged animal, or another man: just what form it appropriates depends on the proportion of good deeds and thoughts to bad in the life just lived. Thus the theory provides an answer to the problem that all the Jobs of the world have found so challenging and so inexplicable: why, in a world which we are told is ruled by a Supreme Spirit who is both omnipotent and good, some people are born rich and some are born poor, some are strong and some sickly, some handsome, some ugly, some temperamentally happy, some gloomy and miserable, some with tendencies to good, others foredoomed, it would seem, to deeds of disgrace and evil.

These differences, asserts the Brahman philosopher, are not the result of accident, of pure chance, but are the inevitable outcome of goodness or wickedness, as the case may be, in preceding existences. In any case, to be born a man always presupposes merit of a sort: it is quite within the bounds of possibility that the soul of a king should enter the body of a monkey, or that a queen's should have to live its next life in the body of a grasshopper. Sin must be punished, virtue must be rewarded: if bad men and good men do not receive their deserts in this life—and who will be so bold or so blind as to assert that they do, at least as a general rule?—then we may assuage our wounded sense of justice with the sure and certain belief that in the next life, or in the next series of lives, goodness and badness will produce their harvest with an inevitability not to be denied.

It is because of their belief in transmigration that the majority of Hindus profess a horror of taking life, even the life of the most noisome and troublesome insect. To crush an ant beneath one's foot may be, morally speaking, as big a crime as the murder of a man, since the soul inhabiting the ant was, as likely as not, a man's in its previous existence, and has been forced to occupy its present lowly carcass in expiation of past misdeeds.

In the Code of Manu the principal sins and the penalties attached to them are carefully enumerated. The slaying of a Brahman is one of the five great sins. The others are: the destruction of an unborn child, i.e. deliberate abortion; the drinking of toddy, the juice of the palm tree; the theft of gold from a Brahman; and sexual intercourse with the wife of one's guru, or religious teacher. Some add a sixth, the holding communication with anyone guilty of any of these five crimes—crimes so fearful that they cannot be

wiped out as other crimes can be, by gifts to the Brahmans, pilgrimages to sacred rivers or mountains, bathing in the sanctifying waters of the Ganges or in the sea at the time of an eclipse, reading the sacred writings, or drinking the urine of the cow, but must be expiated in the after-life or in the torments of hell.

Hell and Heaven. As already indicated, the hell of Hinduism is not a place of eternal torment. The Hindu hell is the place to which are consigned the souls of men who have lived lives of such exceeding wickedness that their crimes and vices cannot be expiated by rebirth in even the lowliest and most despised of animal forms. Such as these are reborn in Naraka, a place of eternal darkness, where the punishment is nicely adjusted to the crime. Fire, serpents, venomous insects, birds of prey, poisons, burning oil, molten metal, vultures, crushing rocks, seas of mud, precipices hundreds of miles high—these are some of the instruments producing the torments of the damned. The pains are adjusted with the most careful bookkeeping to the gravity of the crimes committed. When the souls in hell have expiated their sins they are discharged again into the world to begin a fresh series of transmigrations—to begin with, in the shape of some vile animal, but with the hope and prospect of eventually attaining to union with the Supreme Soul.

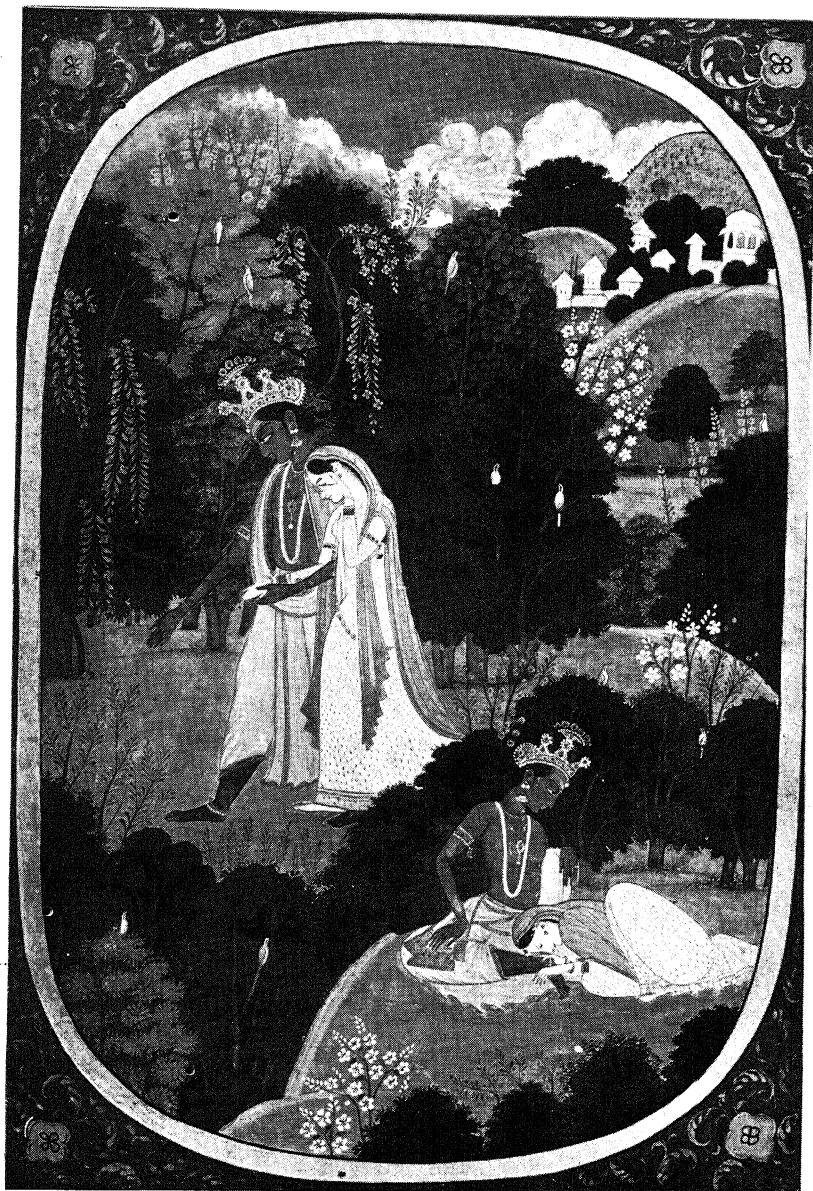
Nor is heaven any more permanent. In the Hindu system there are four successive abodes of bliss through which the soul of a particularly good man may pass: living in the same heaven with God, nearness to God, assimilation to the likeness of God, and finally, complete union with the Supreme Spirit. The soul does not pass from one heaven to another, but is returned from time to time to the earth to be repeatedly purified, by virtuous deeds and thoughts, by penances and gifts to Brahmans and the like, until it has become as pure as gold, has freed itself from the allurements of the world, when it returns to God just as a drop of water returns at long last to the ocean whence it came.

This is the more spiritual conception of heaven. Elsewhere the abodes of bliss are described in glowing terms as providing opportunities for the enjoyment of every kind of pleasure.

Rivalry with Buddhism. For a thousand or twelve hundred years—for as long a period as that which separates us from the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of the Heptarchy—Brahmanism divided the religious allegiance of the Indian peoples with Buddhism. The two great faiths were rivals, yet there was no clear-cut distinction between the two, since in the one and in the other the philosophical basis

and the moral precepts and practice were very much the same. The typical good man of that distant age might have been described as a Buddhist or as a disciple of Hinduism. But the Bráhmans as a caste, a priesthood with a vested interest at stake, saw in the Buddhist teachers competitors whom they must defeat or they themselves must perish as an order. Displaying that astuteness that has seldom failed them, they met Buddhism more than half way, incorporating in their own system sufficient of the Buddhist teaching and practice to win back the allegiance of those who had fallen away. Buddha himself was found a place in the Hindu pantheon as an incarnation of Vishnu, one of the great trinity of gods, just as in our own day some Brahmans have been ready to accept Christ in the same way. The Brahmans made a close study of the religious longings of the people with whom they had to deal, and in due course they were successful in producing a religion that was properly attuned to the demands of the Hindu people, while at the same time it left undisturbed the Brahmans' own privileged position as priests and teachers and social *élite*. By the end of the seventh century A.D. Buddhism was definitely on the wane. As likely as not, the process of elimination was powerfully assisted from within. Certain it is that Buddhism lost its hold, dwindled and diminished from year to year, from generation to generation. There was no process of bloody extermination, nor was there hardly anything that could be given the name of persecution. The Mohammedan invasions of the eleventh and twelfth centuries gave the finishing touch; and from that time to this, Buddhism has never existed in India itself as an organized and established faith.

The Hindu Trinity. So the Brahmans triumphed. But Brahmanism, too, was changed, to such a degree indeed that henceforth we should speak not of Brahmanism, but of Hinduism; the former term is better reserved for the pantheism associated with the Vedas and their offshoots, while now we have to deal with a cruder and much more anthropomorphic faith. Brahma as the Supreme Spirit, the Eternal Essence, the all-comprising God, has only a minor place in the religion that was now evolved and has endured ever since as the solace and sustainer of the Hindu millions: he rules but he does not reign. The supreme god of Hinduism is the triad or trinity—the Trimurti, in Indian phrase—of Brahma (viewed as a god, not as the impersonal First Cause), Vishnu, and Siva, one god in three and three in one, a divine person who manifests himself as Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer.



[Victoria & Albert Museum]

KRISHNA AND RADHA IN LOVING CONVERSE

A painting of the Rajput school, showing the young god walking and reclining in a grove with the most favoured of his milk-maid adorers.

In passing it may be mentioned that the total number of Indian deities is given as thirty-three crores, i.e. 330 millions. They include, as Monier-Williams points out, rocks, stocks and stones, trees, pools, and rivers—the Ganges in particular; a man's implements of trade; the animals he finds most useful, and the noxious reptiles he fears; men, remarkable for great valour or sanctity, virtue, or even vice; good and evil demons, ghosts and goblins; the spirits of departed ancestors; an infinite number of semi-human, semi-divine existences. . . .

So many are the gods and godlings, but their number is always increasing. God-making is a constant practice. Quite a number of British officers of the Army in India have been deified, usually after their death, but sometimes—as in the case of the famous Mutiny general, John Nicholson—while they were still alive. Several missionaries have been similarly given a place in the Hindu pantheon, and of recent years there have been reports of local saints and workers of cures who have been accorded divine honours. Following an outbreak of plague in 1896 a new goddess was born under the name of Mother Plague.

Each of the divine host is worshipped by some; all are revered by everybody—by the simple illiterate peasant who thinks the god is in the idol he humbly adores, and by the cultured scholar to whom the image is an image, but all the same a powerful aid to meditation and to prayer.

Brahma as a personal deity has nowadays few to do him reverence: only half-a-dozen temples are dedicated to him in all India. As the Creator his work was finished long ages since, and there is little to be gained by worshipping him now. But Vishnu and Siva, in their multitudinous manifestations and with their variety of consorts, count their worshippers by the hundred million. And while in theory the three great gods are *personæ* of the one Supreme Spirit, the worship of Vishnu and Siva may be seen in practice as rival religions, and the great mass of Hindus are either Vaishnavas (Vishnuvites) or Saivas (Sivaites).

In the oldest Vedas, Vishnu appears as a sun-god; but in that vast epoch of theological transition in the course of which Buddhism was eventually worsted by the revitalized Brahmanism, he became the friendly god, the especial friend and benefactor of mankind, his services being demonstrated by the successive *avatars* (literally "descents") or incarnations which he underwent in order to save the world and its peoples in times of outstanding peril and calamity.

Ten principal occasions of the god taking human flesh and coming to live among men are given in the Hindu scriptures, the most popular and best-known being his seventh, as Rama, the hero of the Ramayana, and the eighth, as Krishna, the details of whose story are to be found in that other great Hindu epic, the Mahabharata—great in more than one sense, since it consists of about 220,000 lines.

In Vishnu the softness and gentleness of the Indian character find full expression, and his followers strive to demonstrate their



Vishnu the Preserver

devotion by displaying kindness and love towards all creatures, as well as by adoring the Supreme Spirit. The Vaishnavas are marked on their foreheads with their god's emblem—a perpendicular line meeting at its base two oblique lines, roughly in the shape of a trident, freshly painted with clay every day.

Vishnu is the most popular of the Hindu gods, great and small, and all those who yearn for a religion of faith and personal devotion (*bhakti*) come to him with loving trust, burning their lamps before his image, covering it with flowers, and making

oblations of butter or oil or foods which they deem pleasing to his palate.

Siva, on the other hand, is a deity to be approached rather with trembling and in dread. He is powerful to aid, but he is also a terrible enemy, one who has an unquenchable thirst for blood. Around his neck hangs a chain of human skulls, suggestive of his destructive power. Strangely enough—and yet it is not really strange, since death clears the ground on which new life can flourish, and to a believer in transmigration to pass through the



The Dance of Siva

portal of death is to enter upon a fresh existence with all its opportunities for good—Siva is also the divine embodiment of the eternal reproductive power of Nature, and his especial sign is the *lingam*, a conventional representation of the male generative organ, audaciously erect and triumphant. One sect of his particular worshippers, the Lingayats, are so called because they carry a miniature of the lingam on their person, in their hair or hung round the neck in a little box; and in the temples and shrines of the Saivas, and indeed almost everywhere, one may see the polished rounded blocks of black basalt or grey limestone, some exceedingly

lifelike with lines carved to represent veins, or temporary affairs of mud or rice, that by the Hindu devout are held in highest honour as symbols of Siva's potency. Often, or usually, this symbol takes a double form, the lingam standing in a representation of the female *yoni*, in the shape of a ring of brass or stone.

From olden times the bull has been sacred to Siva, since the bull is supposed to unite in peculiar measure strength and reproductive power. Everywhere stone images of Nandin, the sacred bull, stand as guide-posts to the Siva temples; and in Benares, the holiest city of all India, the bulls of Siva roam the streets as citizens held in highest honour.

Several other characters of the third member of the Hindu trinity may be mentioned. The "Blessed One," as Siva is often called, is the outstanding representative of Yogi, the highest exemplar of those who have attained perfection in meditation and austerity; as such he is represented as a naked ascetic, his body covered with ashes and dirt-matted hair. Another is as the lord of spirits and demons, haunting cemeteries and burning-grounds with troops of imps and spirits. Then he may be just the reverse, a jovial rollicking god, a kind of Indian Bacchus, fond of dancing, wine, and women, one who loves to sport with his wife and companion buffoons on the mountain tops.

Saktism. All three of the Trimurti are male gods, but it was not long before they were provided with embodiments of the principle of female energy (*Sakti*) in the shape of consorts. Thus Sarasvati, goddess of speech and wisdom, became the spouse of Brahma; Lakshmi, the goddess of beauty—the Hindu Venus—of Vishnu; and Parvati, daughter of one of the deities of the Himalayan heights, of Siva. Parvati is also known as Kali ("the Black One"), when she is represented as a naked black woman, wearing a garland of skulls and, with gaping mouth and protruding tongue, dancing on the prostrate form of her husband. As such she has to be propitiated with bloody sacrifices of sheep and goats and buffaloes. She is also known as Durga ("the Terrible One"), and in this personification she is a ten-armed goddess with a weapon in each hand. Yet another name is Mahadevi, the Great Goddess, Siva himself being Mahadeva (Mahadeo), the Great God.

In all her activities and manifestations Siva's spouse is an intensified expression of his particular attributes. He is fearful; she is more fearful by far. He is destructive; she is destruction incarnate. He is the creative essence; she is the mother of the world. The

consorts of the other gods are embodiments of *sakti*; she is *sakti* to the *n*th degree.

Sakti Puja is the name given to all the rites of veneration of the female principle. The textbooks of the many sects of *Saktas* are the Tantras—little manuals of mysticism and magic, silly superstition and acute psychological insight—whence the movement is often referred to as Tantrism. Originally there were sixty-four Tantras, but a considerable body of Tantrik literature has accumulated, including a number of dialogues between Siva and Parvati. Like the Puranas, the class of religious literature with which they are associated in time, every Tantra is supposed to treat of the Creation, the destruction of the world, the worship of the gods, the attainment of the things that are desired, and the four modes of union with the Supreme Spirit. In fact, however, many of them can be described only as handbooks for the would-be worker of magic and weaver of spells, since they are filled with mystic letters and magic circles, letters and syllables which have a symbolic significance, diagrams, representations of the lotus, charms of exotic character and in the richest variety—all believed to be possessed of mystical power for good and evil, provided they are uttered or otherwise used in strict accordance with the prescribed formulas.

Just as Siva himself is often represented as part man, part woman—he is “half-woman-lord”—the left half of his body having a female breast and the right a pronounced phallus, so the *Saktas* are divided into two divisions, the right-handed and the left-handed. The former, the great majority, are comparatively decorous, worshipping the lingam and yoni as figuratively as possible, but revering none the less in their daily devotions statues and paintings of a naked woman. But the rites of the left-hand worshippers are far less restrained. Their meetings are held in secret and in secluded places, and among those who enter the circle of worshippers the distinctions of caste are temporarily, but completely, in abeyance. The rites practised by the stricter and extremer members of the sect are said to require the five M's, viz. *madya*, wine; *mansa*, flesh; *matsya*, fish; *mudra*, parched grain with a mystical meaning; and *maithuna*, sexual union. “The object of their devotion,” Sir George MacMunn tells us, “is a living beautiful woman set before them, and the cult of *yoniparast* or yoni-reverence, the worship of her organ of generation, is a very realistic one. Their seances, at which both sexes attend, are accompanied by

excessive, religious ecstasy, which develops into extreme licence under the effect of stimulants." ¹

Sex Worship. Europeans and Americans who have been brought up under Christian influences are inclined to regard this deification of sex, this unrestrained exhibition of the sexual organs, this ceremonial indulgence in the sexual act, as exceedingly repellent and disgusting in the extreme. To them "sex" is just another word for "obscene," and to associate it with religion comes very near to blasphemy. The Hindu, on the other hand, must find it equally difficult to understand the inhibitions, the reactions, of the Westerner, confronted by what after all belongs to the very nature of things, that which lies at the root of being. To him "sex" is essentially religious, and sexual intercourse may be not mere sensual gratification, but a religious act.

In India, Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy has written, we cannot escape "the conviction that sexual love has a deep and spiritual significance. There is nothing with which we can better compare the 'mystic union' of the finite with the infinite ambient—that one experience which proves itself and is the only ground of faith—than the self-oblivion of earthly lovers locked in each other's arms, where 'each is both.' Physical proximity, contact, and interpenetration are the expressions of love, only because love is the recognition of identity. These two are one flesh, because they have remembered their unity of spirit." ²

Here it may be mentioned that the very frequent erotic tales that appear in the Hindu scriptures are said to typify the longing of the human soul for union with the divine. A case in point is the story of the loves of Krishna and the Gopis or milkmaids, the wives and daughters of the cowherds: Radha in particular was the jovial young god's favourite.

Furthermore, an act of sexual union may result in the provision of another earthly home for one of the great host of souls that somewhere or other are awaiting their next rebirth.

So it is that in the Hinduism of to-day, as in all the many centuries during which it has been the religion of the Indian masses, the sexual element is naked and unashamed. The temples are covered inside and out with sculptured scenes taken from the

¹ *Religions and Hidden Cults of India*, p. 162.

² See the essay on Sahija (a kind of listless, lustless passion) in *The Dance of Siva*. A very similar view was expressed by Edward Carpenter when he wrote in *Love's Coming of Age* that "the prime object of Sex is union, the physical union as the allegory and expression of the real union, and that generation is a secondary object or result of this union."

lives of the gods, in which the couplings of men and women, and sometimes of animals, are portrayed in the most realistic and unmistakable fashion. The lingam and the yoni are to be seen on every hand; and yet none who looks upon them, even though she be a modest maiden or budding child, seems to experience the slightest sense of embarrassment. Very often, we are assured, it is not even realized that they are representations of the generative organs. They are just emblems, not symbols.

Brides of the Gods. Then there are the *devadasis*, who are so prominent a feature of Hinduism in South India. These "brides of the gods," as they are sometimes called, since they are united to the idol by wedding rites, are in effect temple prostitutes. They are divided into grades or classes, including the girl who sells herself for her own benefit; the girl who does so to enrich or otherwise benefit her family; the girl who joins a temple out of devotion (since the sacrifice of chastity is the greatest thing she can offer to the god); and the girl who is hired by the temple authorities for the convenience of their clients. Most of these girls are of low caste, but many are accomplished, being taught by the priests to read and write, as well as to sing and dance. So accomplished are they that their attainments have tended to give female education in India a somewhat disreputable tinge.

The devadasis are largely recruited by purchase, but some of them have been consigned to the temple by their parents as a recognition of a divine gift or an answered prayer.

It has been urged in defence of the institution that since there must be a prostitute class in India as in other countries, it is all to the good that the girls should grow up and live and exercise their profession within the temple precincts, where they may at least learn something of religion.

Hindu Marriage. There is nothing unwholesome or guilty about the sex life in Hinduism, claims Sir S. Radhakrishnan. Sex is the basis of marriage, and marriage is the basis, and the superstructure too, of Hindu society. Among Hindus marriage is practically compulsory, enjoined by religion and public opinion. The gods of the Hindus are all married. Hindus would think it very strange to be required to worship a bachelor god or a virgin goddess.

Polygamy is permitted, and there is no limit in theory to the number of wives that a man may have. Polyandry is practised among some of the Himalayan tribes, and elsewhere in some of

the lower castes and aboriginal tribes. In practice, however, monogamy is the general rule, if only for economic reasons; although when a wife is barren it is a common practice to take another, since it is so necessary to have a son; and when a girl is seduced by a married man it is usually expected of him that he should "make an honest woman" of her by taking her to wife. A special factor making for monogamy in India is the rather greater number of men than women.

Child marriage is still widespread, since in strict Hindu practice the bride must be a virgin, though the marriage age is rising as a result of the efforts of reformers, both Indian and British, who are all too well aware of the ill effects of too early wedlock. By the Child Marriage Act of 1929, fourteen years was made the minimum legal age for marriage, and sixteen years the age of consent; but it has proved in practice exceedingly difficult to enforce these provisions. The marriage age is a matter of social status as well as of caste. Generally speaking, it is lowest among the high castes and the well-to-do, but there are some agricultural serfs amongst whom a girl not married before puberty is regarded as polluted and out-casted. Infant marriage has been most favoured in Lower Bengal, where the Brahmans are believed to have found scriptural backing for their teaching that a father who permits his daughter to reach the age of puberty unwed will go straight to hell when he dies.

The marriage ceremony may, however, antedate consummation by many years. Cohabitation may be deferred until one or any odd number of years up to eleven after the wedding. The great, the really important, thing is to get the boy and girl married according to the traditional rites. Every boy is found a wife—Mahatma Gandhi was married at thirteen, while still a schoolboy—and every girl is expected as a matter of course to marry and become a mother at the earliest possible moment. There is no place for the spinster, the old maid, in Hindu society. At the census of 1931 there were, in every 1,000 married Hindus, 164 girl-wives and 73 boy-husbands under fifteen years of age.

The Hindu legists recognize eight kinds of marriage. Highest in the list is that in which personal inclination is subordinated to what is deemed to be right and proper. Marriage by mutual choice is ranked a little lower. Lower still are marriages effected by force and by purchase. Lowest of all is *paisaca*; marriage, that is, when the man ravishes the woman when she is asleep or under the influence of drink or drugs, or she is not in her right mind.

This is universally held to be a disgraceful way of securing a wife, but once the union has been consummated it is a valid marriage. The girl is a wife; and since she may bear a child, it is obviously desirable that it should be born in wedlock.

Both brides and bridegrooms may have to be paid for, particularly in the smaller and locally restricted castes where the choice of mates is very limited. A father of a bevy of girls may be hard put to it to find husbands to take them off his hands; and on the other hand the young man of twenty or so may find it impossible to obtain a wife without having resort to one of the disreputable marriage-brokers, who make a living by buying or abducting girls in districts where women are "superfluous," and selling them to would-be married men. The "stock" of these agents sometimes includes discontented young wives who have run away from their possibly elderly and distasteful spouses, and also damsels of a low caste or no caste at all. When a man wants a wife very badly such defects are likely to be readily passed over, even if they are brought to the notice of the "purchaser."

Woman's Position. It is commonly said that the position of the Hindu woman is degraded and miserable. Missionaries have painted pathetic pictures of beautiful young girls pining away behind the lattice of the zenana, and the woman of the villages has been described as an idol-worshipping slave.

Certainly a woman's status in India is lower than the man's—but this is not by any means peculiar to India. Indian women are regarded by their menfolk, and by themselves, very much as were our grandmothers in Victorian England. "So long as children cannot be shaken from heaven, but have to be built within their mothers' bodies," says Sir S. Radhakrishnan, "so long will there be a specific function for women." Indian girls are not expected to go out to business before marriage or after it. Their job is in the home, serving the needs of their husband, looking after their children. Their only periods of release are the feast days—fortunately rather numerous—of their religion, and the social events, particularly marriages, of their immediate little circle of lives.

Indian women are usually very devout; and the older ones in particular, who no longer have the cares of a household, spend much time in their devotions and reading such books as the Ramayana and the Bhagavad Gita. The younger women and girls pray for a speedy marriage and a good husband. Mr. L. S. S.

O'Malley quotes a prayer offered in Bengal, which, as he says, is also a commination :

May I have a husband like Ram, may I be chaste like Sita, and may my husband be happy. May my co-wife die; may her nose and ears be slit, may I get a golden bowl. May my husband hate her; may I be his best-beloved. May her path be strewn with thorns; may I have a golden son. May she be my slave while I pass my days in laughter. May I be my husband's darling, may she spend her time in cleaning the dust-bin.¹

When an Indian, even an Indian liberal, is reproached for allowing his sisters to live in subjection, he replies that in India freedom is not identified with self-assertion. And in his heart of hearts he would not have it otherwise. He likes woman to be essentially feminine, and he wants her to remain so. She wants that too.

There is often enough a double standard of morality. The man is allowed a liberty that would be ruinous to a woman. But the woman puts on the best face she can muster when her husband's infidelities are reported or he brings another wife into the home. She knows her place. She is happy knowing it and in performing her function, in doing that which only she can do.

Dubois devotes many pages to a vivid description of Hindu married life as he found it in his prolonged and intimate investigations. It is not a favourable picture.

A real union with sincere and mutual affection (he writes), or even peace, is very rare in Hindu households. The moral gulf which exists between the sexes is so great that in the eyes of a native the woman is simply a passive object who must be abjectly submissive to her husband's will and fancy. She is never looked upon as a companion who can share her husband's thoughts and be the first object of his care and affection. The Hindu wife finds in her husband only a proud and overbearing master who regards her as a fortunate woman to be allowed the honour of sharing his bed and board. If there are some few women who are happy and beloved by those to whom they have been blindly chained by their family, this good fortune must be attributed to the naturally kind disposition of their husbands, and not in any way to the training the latter have received.²

In a later page the Abbé quotes from the Padma-purana, one of the most highly revered of this class of Hindu sacred writings :

There is no other god on earth for a woman than her husband. The most excellent of all the good works that she can do is to seek to please him by manifesting perfect obedience to him. Therein should lie her

¹ *Popular Hinduism: the Religion of the Masses* (C.U.P., 1935), p. 107.

² Dubois, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

sole rule of life. Be her husband deformed, aged, infirm, offensive in his manners; let him also be choleric, debauched, immoral, a drunkard, a gambler; let him frequent places of ill-repute, live in open sin with other women, have no affection whatever for his home; let him rave like a lunatic; let him live without honour; let him be blind, deaf, dumb, or crippled; in a word, let his defects be what they may, let his wickedness be what it may, a wife should always look upon him as her god, should lavish on him all her attention and care, paying no heed whatsoever to his character and giving him no cause whatsoever for displeasure. . . .

A wife must eat only after her husband has had his fill. If the latter fast, she shall fast too; if he touch not food, she shall not touch it; if he be in affliction, she shall be so too; if he be cheerful, she shall share his joy. A good wife should be less devoted to her sons, or to her grandsons, or to her jewels, than to her husband. She must, on the death of her husband, allow herself to be burnt alive on the same funeral pyre: then everybody will praise her virtue.

She should always be ready to perform the various duties of her house, and to perform them diligently. Let her bathe every day, rubbing saffron on her body. Let her attire be clean, her eyelids tinged with antimony, and her forehead marked with red pigment. Let her hair be well combed and adorned. Thus shall she be like unto the goddess Lakshmi. She must be careful to sweep her house every day, to smooth the floor with a layer of cow dung, and to decorate it with white tracery. She must keep the cooking vessels clean, and must be ready with the meals at the proper hours. . . .

A wife can enjoy no true happiness unless she attains it through her husband; it is he who gives her children; it is he who supplies her with flowers, sandalwood, saffron, and all good things.

It is also through his wife that a husband enjoys the pleasures of this world. . . . It is through his wife that he does good works, that he acquires riches and honour, and that he succeeds in his enterprises. A man without a wife is an imperfect being ¹

Sita the Faithful. Against this picture drawn by a somewhat unsympathetic and critical artist may be placed that of the woman whom all Hindu India regards as the model of wifely virtue. The heroine of the Ramayana is a wife who had to endure much suffering and affliction, yet was faithful through all and in spite of all to her husband. "Sita," writes Romesh Dutt, the translator of the great epic into English, "holds a place in the hearts of women in India which no other creation of a poet's imagination holds among any other nation on earth. There is not a Hindu woman whose earliest and tenderest recollections do not cling round the story of Sita's sufferings and Sita's faithfulness, told in the nursery, taught in the family circle, remembered and cherished through life. Sita's adventures in a desolate forest and in a hostile prison

¹ Dubois, *op. cit.*, pp. 344-349.

only represent in an exaggerated form the humbler trials of a woman's life; and Sita's endurance and faithfulness teach her devotion to duty in all trials and troubles of life."

Banished for fourteen years from the palace and country of his royal father, in accordance with a rash vow into the making of which the old man had been tricked by one of his young wives, the good and kindly Rama prepares to make his home in the jungle and urges his wife to remain at home and await his return. But sweet and soft-eyed Sita will have none of this. "Do I hear my husband rightly," she asks, "are these words my Rama spake, and her banished lord and husband will the wedded wife forsake?" Scornfully she puts aside his plea.

For the faithful woman follows where her wedded lord may lead,
In the banishment of Rama, Sita's exile is decreed,
Sire nor son nor loving brother rules the wedded woman's state,
With her lord she falls or rises, with her consort courts her fate,
If the righteous son of Raghu wends to forest dark and drear,
Sita steps before her husband wild and thorny paths to clear!

For my mother often taught me and my father often spake,
That her home the wedded woman doth beside her husband make,
As the shadow to the substance, to her lord is faithful wife,
And she parts not from her consort till she parts with fleeting life!
Therefore bid me seek the jungle and in pathless forests roam,
Where the wild deer freely ranges and the tiger makes his home,
Happier than in father's mansions in the woods will Sita rove,
Waste no thought on home or kindred, nestling in her husband's love! ¹

So into the pathless forests Rama and Sita, with Lakshman, the faithful brother, move in accordance with a senseless vow; and the vast poem tells of their life together, their visits to the hermits, Sita's capture by the king of Ceylon, and the wars that at length return her to Rama's arms. Yet the ending is not happy. Rama, in spite of a heavenly guarantee of her purity, sends the loving Sita away once more, and in the forest she dies and enters again the bosom of Mother Earth.

O, for a Son! A Hindu wife can best gratify the man who is her husband and her god by bearing him a son, or better still, sons. For it is an ancient Indian belief that there is no misfortune so great as to leave no legitimate male heir behind to perform the funeral and annual commemorative rites which age-old custom demands—rites intended to soothe the troubled spirit of the dead

¹ *The Ramayana and the Mahabharata*, trans. Romesh Dutt (Dent), p. 34.

man and to furnish it with a temporary or intermediate body without which it is just a ghost, unable to progress into another birth, and so liable to haunt the scene of his last existence.

A son, then, a man must have; and barrenness, or the production of only female children, is next to widowhood the greatest possible curse that may befall a Hindu wife and the most dreaded of all the ills that may happen to the family. A man is happy in proportion to the number of sons he possesses; and however many he may have he still prays to the gods for more, since one never knows what germs of mortality lie in wait in the pestiferous lanes of the great cities and the squalid surroundings of village life. Mrs. Gamp was a model nurse compared with the filthy and superstition-ridden hags who help to make childbirth in India so deadly a matter for mother and child.

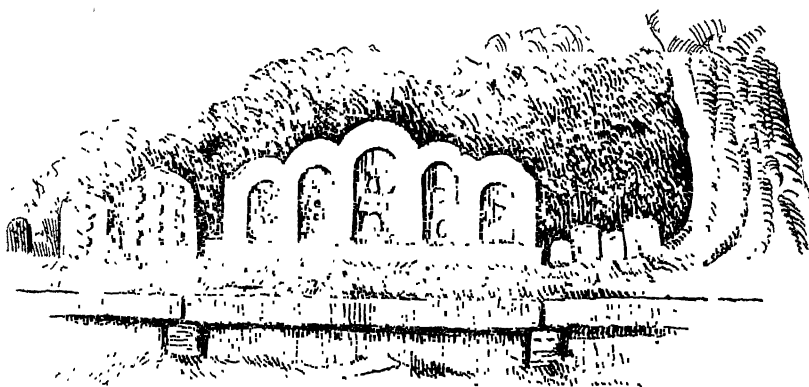
This being the state of affairs, it will be understood that birth-control propaganda is not likely to make much progress in India, although there is probably no country in the world where the material advantages of contraception would be greater and more immediate. The population of India has increased by a hundred millions since the beginning of this century, with the result that all the efforts of British and Indian administrators, engineers, and social workers to raise the standard of living of the masses have been thwarted by the flood of births.

Widows. The reverse of the picture of the Hindu woman joyfully playing with her infant son—the child who is to secure the family line and serve her husband's soul when it is about to embark on the next stage of its age-long journey—is the widow. One in six of Hindu women is a widow. In the Hindu scheme of things a woman who has lost her husband is a thing accursed, since such a misfortune can have befallen her for one reason only—the enormity of her own sins in a former incarnation. Hence it is laid down that from the moment her husband has breathed his last until she herself lies on her death-bed, she must expiate her sins in shame and suffering. Only the firm hand of the British policemen prevents many a grief-maddened widow from wiping out her shame by mounting the funeral pyre and dying upon her husband's corpse.

Suttee (*sati*) or widow-burning was prohibited during the governor-generalship (1825-1835) of Lord William Bentinck, with the support of some enlightened Hindus, notably the famous Raja Ram Mohun Roy, the founder of the Brahmo Samaj, the theistic church of India; but the orthodox opposed its abolition with all

the power at their command, to the extent of carrying their opposition to the court of final appeal, the Privy Council in London. Even at the present time suttee is viewed by many orthodox Hindus not in the least as something to be deplored, but on the contrary as the highest and noblest expression of a woman's deathless love.

- The tombs containing the ashes of women who have committed suttee are held in the greatest reverence; and suttee is still occasionally practised. Attempts at it are reported practically every year.



Suttee Memorials

“This last proof of the perfect unity of body and soul, this devotion beyond the grave,” are the words chosen by Dr. Coomaraswamy to describe it, and he proceeds to express his disagreement with those Western critics who regard suttee as a reproach.

We differ from them in thinking of our “suttees” not with pity, but with understanding, respect, and love. So far from being ashamed of our “suttees” we take a pride in them; that is even true of the most “progressive” amongst us. It is very much like the tenderness which our children’s children may some day feel for those of their race who were willing to throw away their lives for “their country right or wrong,” though the point of view may seem to us then, as it seems to so many already, evidence rather of generosity than balanced judgment. . . .

Criticism of the position of the Indian woman from the ground of assertive feminism leaves us entirely unmoved; precisely as the patriot must be unmoved by an appeal to self-interest or a merely utilitarian demonstration of futility. We do not object to dying for an idea as “suttees” and patriots have died; but we see that there may be other and greater ideas we can better serve by living for them.¹

¹ *The Dance of Śiva*, p. 91

When one reads of the penalties imposed on the luckless widow, at least in the upper castes, one may feel that the speedy end to her troubles that suttee afforded was not very much more dreadful. Dubois and Katharine Mayo between them draw a tragical enough picture. The woman who has lost her husband becomes henceforth a menial, a drudge in the home of which up to now she has been the queen. All the hardest and most objectionable tasks are heaped upon her. She is deprived of her accustomed comforts; she loses what little leisure the cares of the household may have left her. She is allowed but one meal a day, and is required to fast long and often. Her head must be clean-shaved; she must wear no ornaments or gay dresses; and the thread of the *tali*, the gold ornament which married women wear round their necks, is broken. Henceforth she must avoid any scenes of ceremony or rejoicing, for her glance and her shadow are baneful, particularly to the girl about to be married or the woman carrying a child. Those who address her may speak words of contempt and contumely, and she may be counted upon not to rejoin, for she believes that all that is said and done to her is only what she deserves. In some past life she has sinned grievously, and the loss of her husband in this present existence is part of the price exacted by the gods for her iniquities.

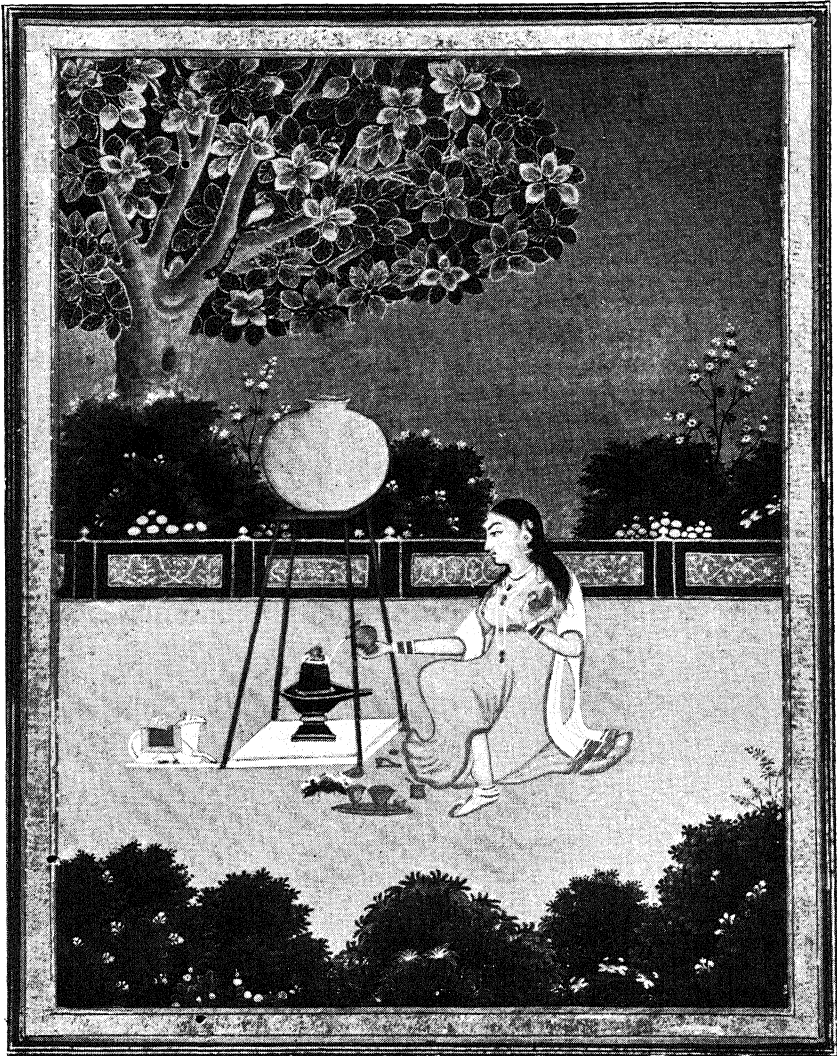
Partly on religious grounds and partly on social (to ensure, e.g. that every girl obtains a husband and does not have to face the competition of widows in the marriage-market), the re-marriage of widows is severely frowned upon, amongst the upper castes at least, even though they be bereaved in the prime of their life. So it is that the country abounds in young widows who in other lands and among other peoples might well become centres of moral infection. But Hindu women have a remarkable reputation for chastity; and though there is religious prostitution there is practically no commercialized vice. In India the buxom young widow, her sexual nature only just aroused, must usually resign herself to a celibate life; and she may well be helped to do so by the conviction already mentioned, that her ills are the inevitable and just result of her own sins. However, some widows brave the ban and re-marry, and there have been cases of widows re-marrying, obtaining a divorce, and marrying yet again.

Of recent years strong efforts have been made to lift the ban on the re-marriage of girl-widows, many of them little children not yet in their teens or pubescent, who ought still to be playing with their dolls—and perhaps still are. Some orthodox Hindus, amongst

whom is Mahatma Gandhi, have urged a relaxation of the marriage-ban in the cases of those widows who are still virgin, who have lost their husbands before cohabitation has been effected or was possible. But as yet the success achieved by these reformers is but slight, and those who brave the age-old custom of their caste run the very grave risk of being outcasted, i.e. of being completely and contemptuously banished from the society of which they have been members from the moment of birth.

Caste. So once again we are brought up against the institution that is most specifically and exclusively Indian. Caste fixes the individual's place once and for all in the scheme of things, and forms the framework of his moral code. In point of fact, strictness in the maintenance of caste is the only real test of Hinduism exacted by the Brahmans of the present day. In matters of mere faith Hinduism is all-tolerant and all-receptive. (It has been said that Hinduism is what a Hindu *does*.) No person who is not born a Brahman can become one, but any person can be admitted into the lower ranks of Hinduism who will acknowledge the supremacy of the Brahmans and obey the rules of the caste. If a man holds to these—and, it should be added, to the inviolable sacredness of the cow or ox—he can hold any opinion he likes.

Admitted, there is, or has been, a kind of caste system in England; people have believed in a close and necessary connection between blood and breeding, and that a lord or squire is born and not made. A duke's daughter seldom marries the dustman's son. But these social distinctions have never been based on religion, and indeed it has been customary to assert that in the sight of God all men are equal. In the sight of the Hindu gods, however, all men are most decidedly *not* equal. It is laid down in the Laws of Manu that Brahma created distinct types of men, as he created varieties of animals: that Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras were born such and must remain such from the moment of birth to the last expiring breath. In course of time the four great castes have become somewhat mixed up, and there is an immense number of sub-castes, each with its rigid, unbreakable rules and its barriers against the members of all the other castes and sub-castes. Marriage, food, professional occupation, and funeral rites are the matters with which caste rules are chiefly concerned; and a good Hindu, a good man, is one who observes with the most scrupulous care the rules of his particular caste that have come down to him from time immemorial.



[Victoria & Albert Museum]

DEVOUT HOMAGE TO THE LINGAM

A Rajput painting of a Hindu lady worshipping the emblem of Siva, the Hindu deity of destruction but also of new life.

Such a system is, of course, utterly opposed to the ideas now dominant in Western civilization. We think it the most natural thing in the world that a man should strive to rise above the limitations of his birth and upbringing, to carve out an honourable and prosperous career for himself, to overcome any and every obstacle that lies in his path. An orthodox Hindu, on the other hand, has no incentive to struggle to improve his lot, since he believes that that lot is something inevitably arranged—that whatever it may be, good, bad, or indifferent, it is what he has earned in his previous existences. Behind him lies an uncountable number of past lives; in front of him stretches an immeasurable series of lives yet to be lived. Why should he worry himself about his present position? Why should he complain if the rules of caste imprison him in a state of society that is uncomfortable and unpleasant? Why should he repine if he is one of the sixty millions or so who are out-castes? It is but for a time; and if he bears his burdens uncomplainingly in this life, if he advances somewhat in religious thought and moral practice, he may have a better lot in his next incarnation.

This is probably the chief reason why the Hindu submits to a system that a European or an American would find intolerable. And it is only fair to add that some acute and dispassionate observers have come to the conclusion that caste, in spite of its many disadvantages, possesses advantages that go far to outweigh its evils. Thus it is argued that on more than one occasion in the ages of Indian history the rigid caste system has prevented Indian society from slipping into barbarism and disorder; that it has imposed and maintained a highly salutary moral restraint; and that the combination of politics and religion has given the Indians a sound foundation for the development of a civilization which, whatever its faults, has endured for thousands of years, and even now, when exposed to all the sapping and disintegrating influences of a materialistic, machine-driven society, displays a truly wonderful power of resistance and capacity for adjustment to changing circumstances.

CHAPTER VI

BUDDHISM

ONE in three of the human race, it is estimated—some five hundred million souls—are Buddhists. So that it may be claimed for Buddhism that it is the most widely-professed of the religions of the world. According to the Buddhist traditions it was founded by an historical character belonging to the Sakyas, a people of northern India. He was a young prince of the name of Siddartha, who is usually known as Gautama, this being the name of the family or clan into which he was born. Other titles given him by his followers are Sakyamuni (the Sage of the Sakyas), the Blessed One, the Happy One, the Lord of the World, the King of Righteousness, and the Conqueror. But to the world at large he is known as Buddha, more properly the Buddha, which means the Enlightened or the Awakened One. Yet another title applied to him is Tathagata, which may be rendered “he who has gained the truth,” sometimes “the Perfect One.” He lived some 2,400 years ago, about the time when ancient Greece was at the height of her glory.

In India, its birthplace, there are few Buddhists to-day, but there are many in Nepal, on the northern boundary, and in Ceylon, the island to the south. In these countries, as in Burma and Indo-China, it is *the* religion. So it is in Tibet; while of China's many, many millions an uncountable number are Buddhists—or ~~are~~ are Buddhists at the same time as they are disciples of Confucius and of Lao-Tse. For the rest, there are Buddhists in the East Indies, in Korea and Japan, among the tribesmen of Mongolia and the Tartars who still survive in the Volga basin. Even in Western lands there are Buddhists, for the appeal of this philosophic religion or religious philosophy is not limited by colour of skin or place of birth or intellectual tradition. Buddhism is indeed a world faith.

In the early days of Buddhistic study (which is not so very long ago, since it was only in 1844 that Eugène Burnouf, the eminent French Orientalist, published his “Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism,” that was the real beginning of Western interest in and knowledge of the great Oriental religion) it was sometimes

argued that Buddha was not an historical character, but the sun-god or some other allegorical figment of the human imagination. This view finds few defenders nowadays, and most scholars are agreed that there is a solid basis of fact for the belief in a personal Buddha, although it is admitted that this foundation has been overlaid by a mass of extravagant fable and sometimes grotesque legend.

It is generally held by Western authorities that Buddha was born some time in the sixth century B.C., and the dates usually given for his eighty years of life are 563-483 B.C. But the Buddhists of Ceylon have a tradition that he was born in the seventh century, viz. in 624 B.C. and lived until 544 B.C. The place of his birth was Kapilavastu, a hundred miles north of Benares, in the Tarai district that lies between the Ganges plain and the Himalayas; and in 1896 a memorial column which had been erected about 250 B.C. by the Buddhist emperor Asoka was dug up within the borders of Nepal, bearing the inscription, "Here the Blessed One was born." In this region the Sakyas, an Aryan tribe, had settled down and established the little principality of which Buddha's father, Suddhodana, was king or rajah.

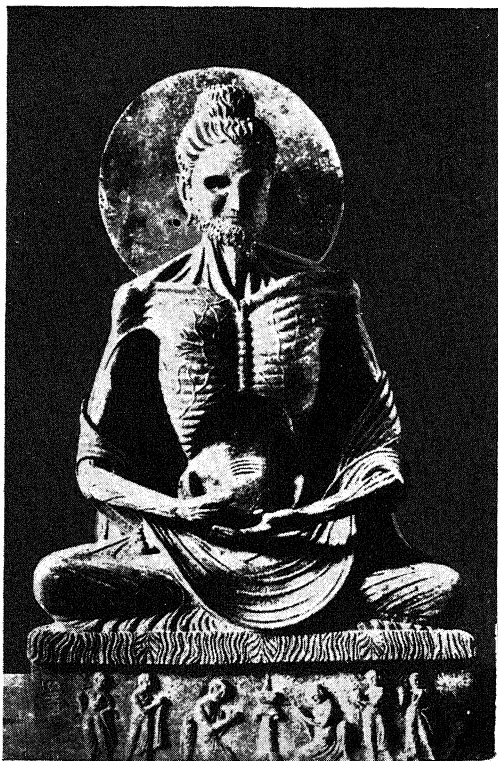
The ancient story tells that Suddhodana had married two sisters; but for many years there was no child of the marriage—a misfortune indeed among the Aryans, who, like the Hindus generally, thought that a man's welfare after death depended upon certain funeral rites conducted by his son. Great, then, were the rejoicings when Maya, the elder sister, then in her forty-fifth year, was found to be with child. She left her husband's palace for her parents' home, and on the way there gave birth to a son in a garden or wooded grove, centuries later marked by Asoka with an inscribed pillar. Mother and child were taken back to Suddhodana's house, and there Maya died seven days later. But Gautama found a foster-mother in his aunt, his father's second wife.

Marvellous stories grew up about his birth and his precociousness, his wisdom, and the miraculous gifts with which he was endowed; but these stories are in the same class as the similar stories told, for instance, of Christ. Legend has played also about his youthful years, and there is little that can be regarded as history. One old tale tells of his proving his strength and prowess as a bowman and in the other arts of the accomplished warrior, and this may well have had a grounding in fact; but for the rest, the accumulation of story is filled with discrepancies impossible to

reconcile and absurdities impossible to explain. At a very early age he was married to his cousin, the beautiful and charming princess Yasodhara, and his father built for the happy pair three palaces (one for each season, hot, cold, and rainy) in which, surrounded by all that could make life easy and agreeable, they passed their days and nights in the routine of pleasure. For twelve years the young man, who very early seems to have given signs of a meditative and unselfish disposition, lived with his princess charming in their gilded cage, from which Suddhodana, who had been warned by the Brahmans that if his son saw the "four signs" he would leave the world, took the extremest care to exclude everything that might depress his spirit.

But, the story goes on, the ugliness of the outside world could not be kept hidden. Gautama, on one of his chariot-drives into the surrounding country, saw the four signs—an old man, weighed down by years and afflictions; another ravaged with sickness; a third who was a corpse ready for the funeral pyre; and finally one who had put aside the things of the world and was an ascetic dwelling in a solitary retreat. What he had seen weighed heavily on the young man's mind. He put question after question to his faithful companion, the charioteer Channa, demanding if disease and old age and death were the customary lot of men dwelling outside the palace walls. When at length he appreciated the truth so long kept from him, he lost all appetite for the joys that (we may well believe) had already cloyed his sensitive palate; "the elation in life utterly disappeared." Already he sensed the approach of sickness, and heard in the distance the inexorable footfalls of a joyless and withered old age. As with many another great thinker before and since, life as a whole seemed to be nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit.

Tormented by a sense of the world's woes, and tired of the luxuries and sheltered existence that had been his hitherto, the young prince decided to abandon all in exchange for a life of concentrated meditation and austere self-denial. Perchance then he might find the secret of the mysterious scheme of things, the why of disease and sin, the wherefore of unmerited suffering and untimely death, the how of escape. The birth of a son is said to have been the immediate cause of his resolve. "This is a new and strong tie I shall have to break," he is reported to have said when the news was brought to him as he sauntered in a garden by the river, and he returned home not joyful but sad. Through the

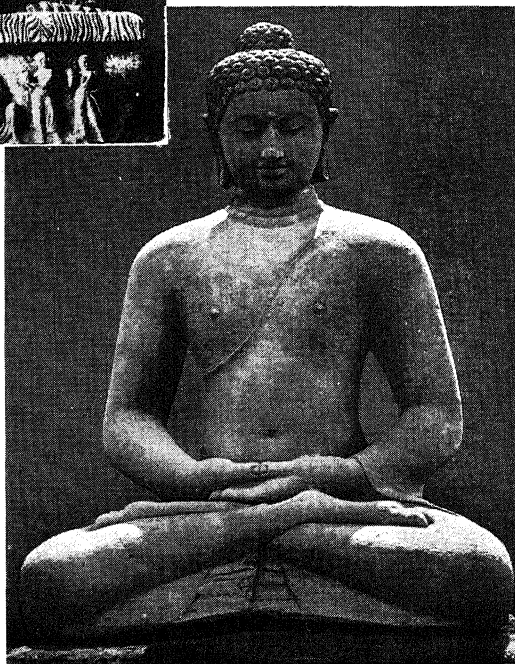


GAUTAMA
THE
ASCETIC

*From Dr. E. J. Thomas,
'A History of
Buddhist Thought'*

BUDDHA
THE
CONTEMPLATIVE

Statue at Boro
Budur, Java.



crowds celebrating the coming of the infant prince he passed into the palace; and that night he left his home and loved ones and rode away, accompanied only by the faithful Channa. And him, too, he sent back at the end of the night's ride. This is what the Buddhist writers call the Great Renunciation.

From now on Gautama was a poor student, a religious beggar, living far from the cheerful homes and haunts of men, a wanderer on the face of the earth. But still happiness or even serenity of mind escaped him. He spent some little time at the feet of two devout and learned Brahmans, studying the Vedas and all the accumulated lore of the priests and philosophers of Hinduism. To him it was dust and ashes in the mouth, and at length he abandoned it for a course of rigorous asceticism. Retiring to Uruvela, some fifty miles south of Patna, he fasted, he meditated, he performed penances and practised austerities of the extremest kind until, in his own words, his ribs stuck out as the beams of an old shed stick out, and the bones of his spine were like a row of spindles.

If enlightenment were to be had by asceticism, then Buddha must have been enlightened soon enough. Such was his way of life that a little band of five personal disciples gave him their admiration and love. Still his spirit found no rest, his mind still moved uncertainly among the philosophies. At the end of six years he came to the conclusion that this, too, was vanity, and abandoned in disgust the life he had been living. Whereupon his disciples were grieved at the fall of so good a man, and went slowly away with heavy hearts.

Beneath the Bo Tree. Then at nightfall, perhaps on the evening of his friends' departure, the Prince of Evil, the Demon of Wickedness, Mara, came to tempt him as Satan came to tempt Jesus in the wilderness. It is an incident that some of the Buddhist writers (but not all; some omit it altogether) have loved to describe as a contest charged with immense significance, and accompanied by astounding marvels. Appalling meteors fell from heaven, clouds and darkness prevailed. The ocean was thrust upward by an earthquake, mountain peaks were levelled to the ground, rivers reversed their course. A fierce tempest howled, the sun was eclipsed, and a host of headless spirits glided through the air. And in and about this nightmare scene flitted menacing forms and lovely shapes, all the presences that could tempt a mind eager to know and a body hungry for experiences long denied. But all the wiles of the Evil One were in vain. Sublime and serene, the young

man remained in almost contemptuous disregard of the violent attacks made upon him by the Tempter and his horde of attendant demons.

The storm of temptation subsided, and outraged Nature resumed her normal course. But still Gautama sat on, beneath what was to be known to all future ages as the sacred Bodhi tree, the tree of enlightenment. Hours passed, the dawn was at hand; and still he sat there in that crosslegged, contemplative pose that has been made so familiar by countless statues, works of art and sometimes less than art. At long last the crisis came and was passed. Gautama became Buddha, the Enlightened One. Enlightened, because he had reached to the core of the mystery of existence; he had discovered the causes of sorrow in all its manifestations; he had mastered both the causes and the cure. Enlightened—but let me quote a few passages from “The Light of Asia,” that beautiful poem of Sir Edwin Arnold’s that has introduced so many of the English-speaking peoples to the Buddha and his thought.

In the third watch,

The earth being still, the hellish legions fled,
A soft air breathing from the sinking moon—
Our Lord attained *Sammā-sambuddh*; he saw,
By light which shines beyond our mortal ken,
The line of all his lives in all the worlds;
Far back, and farther back, and farthest yet,
Five hundred lives and fifty. . . .

Also, Buddha saw,

How new life reaps what the old life did sow;
How where its march breaks off its march begins;
Holding the gain and answering for the loss;
And how in each life good begets more good,
Evil fresh evil; Death but casting up
Debit or credit, whereupon th’ account
In merits or demerits stamps itself
By sure arithmetic—where no tittle drops—
Certain and just, on some new-springing life;
Wherein are packed and scored past thoughts and deeds,
Strivings and triumphs, memories and marks
Of lives foregone. . . .

Then in the middle watch,

Our Lord attained *Abhidjñā*—insight vast
Ranging beyond this sphere to spheres unnamed,
System on system, countless worlds and suns
Moving in splendid measures, band by band

Linked in division, one, yet separate,
The silver islands of a sapphire sea
Shoreless, unfathomed, undiminished, stirred
With waves which roll in restless tides of change.

These he beheld with unsealed vision, and in all those worlds
he discovered,

That fixed decree at silent work which wills
Evolve the dark to light, the dead to life,
To fulness void, to form the yet unformed,
Good unto better, better unto best,
By wordless edict; having none to bid,
None to forbid; for this is past all gods,
Immutable, unspeakable, supreme;
A Power which builds, unbuilds, and builds again,
Ruling all things accordant to the rule
Of virtue, which is beauty, truth, and use:
So that all things do well which serve the Power,
And ill which hinder. . . .

Finally, in the fourth watch he was given the secret of pain or
sorrow, the first of the " Noble Truths " which he was destined to
propound; and the other truths which show how sorrow can be
ended by him who follows through life the Noble Eightfold Path.

Sorrow is
Shadow to life, moving where life doth move;
Not to be laid aside until one lays
Living aside, with all its changing states,
Birth, growth, decay, love, hatred, pleasure, pain,
Being and doing. . . .

Even those who know these sad delights and pleasant griefs to
be snares refuse to strip them off.

The living drink
Deeper and deeper of the false salt waves
Whereon they float, pleasures, ambitions, wealth,
Praise, fame, or domination, conquest, love;
Rich meats and robes, and fair abodes and pride
Of ancient lines, and lust of days, and strife,
To live, and sins that flow from strife, some sweet,
Some bitter. . . .

Seeking to quench life's thirst, they take deep draughts which
double thirst, whereas the wise man, the Enlightened One, he

feeds his sense
No longer on false shows, files his firm mind
To seek not, strive not, wrong not; bearing meek
All ills which flow from foregone wrongfulness,

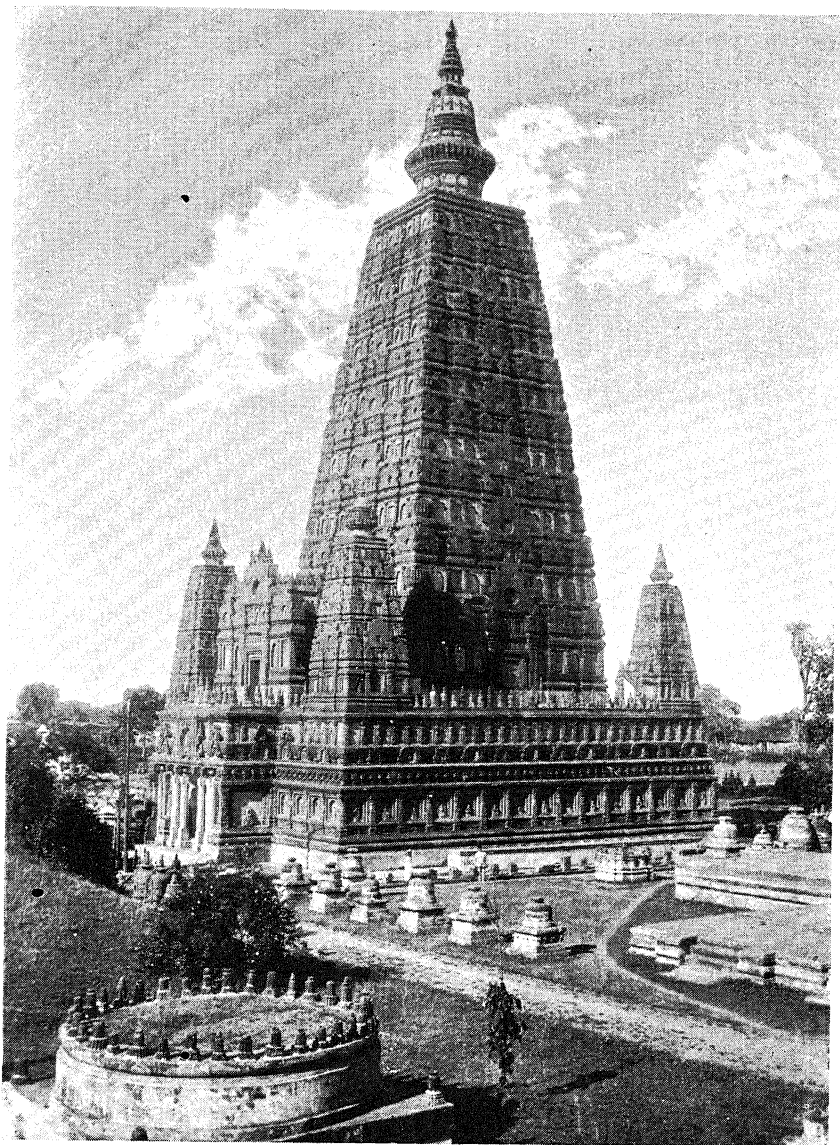
And so constraining passions that they die
 Famished; till all the sum of ended life—
 The *Karma*—all that total of a soul
 Which is the things it did, the thoughts it had,
 The "Self" it wove—with woof of viewless time,
 Crossed on the warp invisible of acts—
 The outcome of him on the Universe,
 Grows pure and sinless; either never more
 Needing to find a body and a place,
 Or so informing what fresh frame it takes
 In new existence that the new toils prove
 Lighter and lighter not to be at all,
 Thus "finishing the Path"; free from Earth's cheats. . . .
 Until—greater than Kings, than Gods more glad!—
 The aching craze to live ends, and life glides—
 Lifeless—to nameless quiet, nameless joy,
 Blessed NIRVANA—sinless, stirless rest—
 That change which never changes!¹

The place where Gautama became the Buddha is by ancient tradition Bodh Gaya, in the forest of Gaya, in the modern Bihar; Buddhists believe it to be the centre of the world. The tree—a pipal, or peepul—that became the Bodhi tree was still there when King Asoka in the third century B.C. built a shrine beside it. Long afterwards, about A.D. 500, the present temple of Bodh Gaya was erected, and in the temple garden there is a large fig tree which may be a descendant of that under which the Buddha sat.

The First Discourse. After his enlightenment Buddha spent several weeks near the Tree of Enlightenment. Then he went to Benares, where his former disciples were living. He found them in the cool of the evening in the Deer Park to the north of the city—a place which is held by Buddhists to be hardly less sacred than the garden at Bodh Gaya. At first, so the tradition goes, they were not at all pleased to see him; had he not put his hand to the plough and yet turned back? But he met their doubts in a discourse which is supposed to be the first of his preachings, the first occasion on which, in the phrase consecrated by Buddhist belief and custom, he "turned the wheel of the Doctrine" (or "Law").

Professor Rhys Davids, in his little manual on Buddhism that was first published in 1877 and has appeared in more than twenty editions since, says that this phrase means "to set rolling the royal chariot-wheel of a universal empire of truth and righteousness." This seems rather far-fetched, perhaps; but we are on sure ground in stating that the Buddha is held to have portrayed the course of

¹ *The Light of Asia*, Bk. VI.



WHERE GAUTAMA BECAME THE BUDDHA

The great temple at Bodh Gaya, the birthplace of Buddhism. On the left is the Bo-tree, supposed to be a lineal descendant of the one under which Buddha received enlightenment.

the individual in his transmigration in twelve stages, constituting the "Chain of Causation," and this came to be represented as a wheel.

The Chain or Wheel of Life is made up of man's endless births, deaths, and rebirths, which are inevitable unless and until he can escape the circle and attain to a knowledge of the Truths. In representations of the Wheel of Life figures of Buddha are shown outside the Wheel's rim, these being Buddhas who have escaped from the dreary round; while other figures shown inside the segments represent, sometimes in allegory, the state of the individual who is still bound by his ignorance to rebirth.

The Eightfold Path. Buddha's first sermon, the "Discourse of setting in motion the wheel of the Doctrine," as it is named in the Buddhist canon of scripture, has come down to us in several versions, and the one I am using here is that of Dr. Edward J. Thomas, given in his "The Life of Buddha as Legend and History," and "Early Buddhist Scriptures." It was addressed to the five monks or mendicants in the Deer Park at Benares; and opens with an exhortation to avoid on the one hand the extremes of devotion to the pleasures of sense, which are "low, vulgar, common, ignoble, and useless"; and on the other such "painful, ignoble, and useless self-torture" as is practised by the Hindu ascetics. Avoiding these two extremes, they should endeavour to follow the Middle Way or Path "which produces insight and knowledge, and tends to calm, to higher knowledge, enlightenment, Nirvana!"

And what is this Middle Way? he went on, and made answer: "This is the noble Eightfold Path, namely, right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration."

But why should we follow this Middle Way? we may suppose his first audience to have inquired of the Buddha. Why not continue to put our trust in those mortifications of the flesh to which we have been accustomed, and which are supported by the authority of the wise and good of all the ages? Would it not be better to continue as our fathers did, to fast and pray, to sacrifice to the gods those things which we have every reason to believe are pleasing to them and will enlist their good offices in putting short our succession of lives—or at least in ensuring that in the lives that lie ahead we may be permitted to progress in virtue until we are absorbed in and by the Universal Spirit?

In response to their doubts and questionings, Buddha is said

to have made reply with a statement of four fundamental truths, the "four Noble Truths" of Buddhism:

Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of *pain*: birth is painful, old age is painful, sickness is painful, death is painful, sorrow, lamentation, dejection, and despair are painful. Contact with unpleasant things is painful, not getting what one wishes is painful. . . .

Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of the *cause of pain*: that craving, which leads to rebirth, combined with pleasure and lust, finding pleasure here and there, namely the craving for passion, the craving for existence, the craving for non-existence.

Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of the *cessation of pain*, the cessation without a remainder of that craving, abandonment, forsaking, release, non-attachment.

Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of the *way that leads to the cessation of pain*: this is the noble Eightfold Path. . . .

Thus, O monks, among doctrines unheard before, in me sight and knowledge arose, wisdom, knowledge, light arose. . . .¹

Whereupon the five monks squatting before him in the dust "expressed delight and approval at the Lord's utterance," and became his disciples from that time on as they had been in the years of his unenlightened mortifications. Others, too, were drawn to the new doctrine, so that before very long Buddha was in a position to send out sixty missionaries into the country round about. "I am released, monks," he told them, "from all ties both divine and human. You, also, monks, being released from all ties both divine and human, go journeying for the profit of many, for the happiness of many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, profit, and happiness of gods and men. Let not two of you go one way. Teach the Doctrine, monks, good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, in the spirit and the letter, and proclaim a perfectly complete and pure religious life." ²

Buddha's Later Years. One of Buddha's discourses supposed to date from the early period of his ministry is known as the Sermon on the Lessons to be drawn from Burning. The story runs that he was seated with three new converts, who had been worshippers of Agni, the sacred fire, on the Elephant Rock near Gaya, when a fire broke out in the jungle on the opposite hillside. As Jesus would have done in similar circumstances, Buddha seized on the occurrence as his text. So long as men remain in ignorance, he

¹ Dr. E. J. Thomas, *The Life of Buddha as Legend and History* (Kegan Paul, 1931), p. 87.

² Thomas, *Early Buddhist Scriptures*, p. 34.

began, they are consumed by inward fires. Through the senses they experience misery and joy, because these supply fuel, as it were, for the lusts of the flesh, for anger, for the anxieties of birth, decay, and death. But those who follow the Path of the Buddha, the way whose gate is purity and whose goal is love—they have become wise. In them the fires of concupiscence and the rest have ceased to burn. They experience no longer the craving thirst for sensation which is the origin of evil. The wisdom they have acquired will lead them on, sooner or later, to perfection, when they will be delivered from the miseries which would result from another birth. Even in this present birth they have a freedom denied to the rest of mankind, for they no longer need the guidance of such laws and institutions as caste and ceremonial observances and sacrifices. They have already left such things far behind them.

About this time Buddha put on a regular footing the little society of religious mendicants he had founded, and devised a simple code for the conduct of his followers. Like the Christian friars some seventeen hundred years later, they lived by begging, receiving in their wooden bowls the humble tribute of the common folk who listened to their gospel or perhaps thought that no harm and some good would come from giving a handful of rice and a drink of water to these holy men.

But it was not long before the enthusiasm with which Buddha and his disciples had been greeted gave place to something not far removed from actual hostility. There was no persecution; Brahmanism was too all-inclusive for that, and the master and his disciples continued to be regarded, and possibly regarded themselves, as still contained within the vast, and in fact illimitable, bounds of the ancient religion. It was the doctrine of renunciation of all the things that to the ordinary man make life worth living—it was this that challenged the attention of priests and people alike. If nothing is to be desired, why sacrifice to the gods to persuade them to do our will, to give us what we want—when we have no wants? Here obviously was a menace to the priesthood's vested interest in the sacrifices.

Then there was the question of celibacy. The Brahmins, it was true, advocated celibacy for the young student before marriage, and for men grown old; during the middle years of life the religious should act as other men, enjoying the pleasures of sense, and reproducing their kind. How otherwise would a sufficient number of bodies be provided for the multitude of souls waiting to be

re-born? And how, the rulers of the little political States demanded, are cities and villages to remain populated, and households maintained, if we all do as the Buddhists do and have neither wives nor offspring? Even the professional ascetics looked at the new celibates with jealousy and suspicion.

To all abuse and ridicule and complaints Buddha, we are told, returned much the same answer. He would compel no man to follow the Eightfold Path. He admitted that in so far as he was successful the country would indeed be depopulated, and in time might be politically and militarily ruined. But what some people called ruin he would call a blessing. He preached a way of escape from sorrows, and that way was by the renunciation of all the earthly things that could not but bring sorrow in their train.

Buddha is supposed to have been twenty-nine when he made his Great Renunciation, and about five-and-thirty when he found Enlightenment. He died, according to tradition, when he was eighty or eighty-one. Thus there is a matter of forty-five years to be covered by the chroniclers and biographers. But what they tell us is so confused, so mixed with obvious myth and absurd fable, that it is next to impossible to construct a connected narrative of these later years about which we would gladly know so much.

Quite early he is supposed to have returned for a while to his native country, and to have been received by his aged father with a wondering sorrow and by Yasodhara with tearful joy. Since the recluse, in the yellow robes affected by Hindu beggars, with the shaven head and face, could not allow himself to be touched by a woman, his widowed wife stood on one side as he went down the dusty street. But when Buddha, apparently much against his will, at length established an order of female mendicants, the still lovely Yasodhara was one of the first of the Buddhist nuns. This was after the death of his father, whom he, with filial reverence, cremated with the accustomed ceremony.

For the rest, Buddha seems to have spent his time in and out of heaven, flying here to work a miracle and there to reconcile a feud, preaching in this district and in that, joining issue with schismatics who objected that Buddha's rule was not nearly strict enough. One of his own disciples demanded that the holy men should live always in the open air and not close to towns, that they should beg their food from door to door and never eat meat. To him Buddha made reply that a disciple could follow these strict rules if he chose. It was possible, he went on, to attain a

state of purity seated in meditation at the foot of a tree or in a house, clad in rags or in quite respectable clothes presented by laymen, whilst abstaining from meat or whilst partaking of it. To establish one uniform law would make it more difficult to follow the path to Nirvana, and that he would not do. He had come with one purpose only, to show men the way to Nirvana.

So we reach the last days of the teacher, told in the "Book of the Great Decease." Buddha spent the rainy season, the forty-fourth after his Buddhahood, at the Vulture's Peak, a cave overlooking the valley of Rajagriha; and then crossed the Ganges at the spot where the city of Patna now stands. Then he went on to Vesali, where, much to the disgust of the local nobles, he was the guest of Ambapali, the leading courtesan. During the next rainy season he was attacked by a severe and painful illness; and as an old, old man, on the eve of his departure from this world, he moved slowly through the villages, meeting his disciples and delivering to them a final exhortation to keep the faith and follow the Eightfold Path. "O Mendicants!" runs the version given by Rhys Davids, "thoroughly learn, and practise, and perfect, and spread abroad the Law, thought out and revealed by me, in order that this religion of mine may last long and be perpetuated for the good and happiness of the great multitudes, out of pity for the world . . . Be earnest, thoughtful, and pure! Steadfast in resolve, keep watch over your own hearts! Whosoever shall adhere unweariedly to this Law and Discipline, he shall cross the ocean of life and make an end of sorrow."¹

The end came when Buddha had arrived in a copse on the river bank at Kusinara, in Oudh. There he lay down to die, cared for in his last moments by his faithful attendant Ananda, the "beloved disciple" of Buddhism. Ananda broke down, and in a sorrowful aside murmured: "I am not yet perfect and my Teacher is passing away, he who is so kind." Buddha overheard him, and bade him not to be troubled, neither to weep. "Have I not told you that we must part from all we hold most dear and pleasant?" For a long time, he went on, Ananda had been very dear to him and had done him many kindnesses, in act and in word. "You have always done well; persevere, and you shall be quite free from this thirst of life, this chain of ignorance."

Buddha's last words were spoken to the members of his Order, who were gathered about his couch. "Now then, monks, I address

¹ T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhism* (1907), p. 79.

you," they ran; "subject to decay are compound things; strive with earnestness." Soon afterwards the Tathagata lapsed into unconsciousness, or, as the Buddhists say, went into trance after trance until from the fourth he straightway attained Nirvana. For him the Wheel had ceased to turn.

Karma and the Moral Law. Buddhism has often been called a reaction from Brahmanism, yet it was in certain ways a development out of it. Buddha himself was a Kshatriya, one of the military caste; but he numbered among his disciples many Brahmins, and he held individual Brahmins in high esteem. Buddhism accepted the doctrines of karma and of transmigration, so that the problem of life was the same for both the great faiths, although Buddhism solved it in its own way. Its general attitude to life is one of pessimism, and the supreme aim of the individual is represented as being the termination as early as possible of the succession of existences which are the inevitable lot of every human being. But, unlike modern pessimism, it held (and this was its chief message) that a state of release from pain is attainable by all, whatever their caste, their race, even their sex.

It is in their doctrine of the soul that Hinduism and Buddhism are at variance. Hinduism teaches (as we have seen) that behind the self of experience there is an *atman*, a permanent soul, that lives on from life to life, that persists behind the changing self of experience, for thousands, tens of thousands, of successive re-incarnations until at long last it is reabsorbed into Brahma, the Universal Soul. Buddhism, however, teaches that there is no permanent substratum of our individual lives. The human individual is made up of *khandas*, or elements, physical and mental—a man may be described indeed as a bundle of *khandas*—that are always changing as they are carried on from birth to birth but are never totally dispersed, until the power that holds them together and impels them to rebirth—the power that is thirst, craving, desire for existence—is finally extinguished.¹

This conception is supported and illustrated by the analogies of running water and a burning flame. Both seem to show something perpetual, something permanent or at least very long-lasting. But in fact the flowing stream and the burning flame are ever changing, never the same from one instant to the next, however constant the processes of flow and combustion seem to be.

In some strange way, then, hardly to be understood by a

¹ See Thomas, *Life of Buddha*, pp. 35, 205.

Western mind, each individual inherits all, both of good and evil, that he has done—his *karma*—in his previous existences; he takes up the struggle in his new life where he left off in the one just ended. But except for the Sage who can remember his past births—Buddha, for example, could recall a hundred thousand births, and that he was in each of such and such a name, clan, caste, way of life, and so on—he is never conscious of what even his most recent life was like, nor can he have any clear idea of the form his next incarnation will take.

Karma is not the same thing as Fate. The latter is amoral, neither moral nor immoral, and contravenes the law that results are exactly proportionate to causes. But karma finds a moral cause for all the effects that it seeks to explain. An innocent man who becomes the victim of oppression may bow his head with resignation and murmur, "This was preordained, this is my fate, I must submit and make the best of it": he may hope perhaps that in the future, whether in this world or in some future state, the wrong will be righted and justice done to him. A man who believes in karma, on the other hand, will think, "This is my own doing, I must bear no malice," and will try to rectify the balance of justice by assuming a cause, behind what he sees, in the obscurity of the past.

It will be apparent that this doctrine has a very high ethical significance. A man is born into squalor; he inherits some horrible disease; from the moment of birth until the moment of death he is dogged by calamity apparently undeserved; he is a pariah or outcast, perhaps a slave. Ah but, answers the Buddhist, all these evil things that have happened to him *were* deserved; they are the inevitable result, the inexorable working out, of misdeeds in a previous existence or previous existences. He accumulated a bad karma, and is now paying the price.

Similar explanations are advanced for apparently undeserved good fortune. A man is born with a silver spoon in his mouth; he is happy in all his relationships, successful in every high-minded endeavour. Well, then, we may be pretty sure that he has deserved his good fortune. In his past life and lives he accumulated a good karma, which is now standing him in very good stead.

Good men accumulate good karma, and thus enter on a new life on favorable terms. Bad men accumulate a karma that may be so small and mean that it involves reincarnation as a plant or an animal, in a sub-human or non-human shape. Nor does this

represent the lowest depths of degradation to which a bad character may condemn himself. There are abysses of human wickedness, and in the Buddhist cosmogony there are 136 different hells for the reception of those who have sinned too grievously to be re-incarnated in even the lowest and foulest of earth's creatures. These hells are arranged in order of intensity and duration of punishment, the least term being ten million years; they are places where the accumulation of crimes and sins is worked out, as it were, when the man may start again at the bottom of the ladder, perhaps as a plant or beast, for a fresh stage on the journey onward and upward.

If a man is capable of horrible wrongdoing, he is capable too of sublime goodness. In Buddhism there are as many heavens as there are hells, and in any one of these the man who has built up a particularly good karma may be permitted to dwell for billions of years. But there is an end to the joys of heaven, as there is to the tortures of hell. Still the Wheel keeps on turning, and the round of existences continues. Life after life, a plunge into hell, an ascent into heaven: so it goes on for uncountable ages. Buddha himself, we are told, was at the end of a chain of existences of almost every conceivable form, on the earth and in the air and in the water, in heaven and in hell, before in his last incarnation as Sakyamuni he attained to Enlightenment as the Buddha and was subject to no further births. Other men too have been able to attain Buddhahood; and others will do so in the future. Buddhists to-day are expecting the next Buddha in the person of Metteyya; he will be the fifth—Buddha was the fourth—in the present cycle of world-history.

There is no Supreme Being in Buddhism. If a man does good, he does it not because he fears God, but because he is appalled by the consequences, by the thought, of setting an evil karma on the move down the corridors of time. If he does good, it is not because he would please God, but because he believes that good deeds done in this life lessen the load that he will have to carry in the lives that lie ahead. This is the moral basis of Buddhism.

About the First Cause that European philosophers have seen fit to postulate, the Buddhist thinkers profess to know, and seem to care, nothing. Buddhism makes no attempt to solve the mystery of the origin of the world, to determine the how, the why, and the wherefore of the universe. When the Buddha was asked on one occasion whether the world was eternal or not eternal, he made no reply, we are told, thus indicating that he considered the inquiry



ADORING THE SACRED TOOTH OF BUDDHA

At the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, Ceylon, Buddhist priests and laymen do reverence before one of the most famous and precious relics of the Blessed One.

one that was entirely profitless. Buddhism begins its thinking with the material world and conscious beings living in it taken as a basis. It is not interested in a First Cause, an *Élan Vital*, a Divine Mathematician, or any other creation of the imaginative intelligence. It recognizes no need for a God, even one that is indefinable and unknowable.

All the same, there is law in the universe, rigid, inexorable law, the law of Cause and Effect. *Why* this law exists, and who or what instituted it, are questions that the Buddhist pushes on one side: he knows that there is a universal law that what a man sows, that shall he also reap. There is no escape from the consequences of one's deeds. Every thought, every action, sets in train a succession of consequences that may not be exhausted in millions of the years that lie ahead. Not until the karma is exhausted; not until the thirst for existence is completely quenched.

The Path to Nirvana. This thirst, this craving or cleaving, is due to ignorance; and in what is styled his first discourse, Buddha gave the Eight Divisions of the Path that the pious man should follow if he would become truly virtuous and wise and help mankind to escape from sin and sorrow. Now we may take a further step in this spiritual topography and learn that there are four Paths, or stages of the Path. The first of these is the "entering into the stream," or conversion, which follows on companionship with the good, the hearing of the Law, enlightened reflection, and the practice of virtue. When a man has entered upon this path, he becomes free from the delusion of self, from doubts as to the Buddha and his doctrines, and from the belief in the efficacy of rites and ceremonies.

The second stage is that in which a man has become free from the dominion of evil passions. If he has attained this, then he is numbered among those whose karma requires only one more return to this world.

The third stage is the one in which every remaining vestige of sensuality and malevolence is destroyed. Those who have reached this stage are destined to return no more to this world, but will be reincarnated in a state far above and beyond the heavens of sensual enjoyment.

Finally we come to the fourth stage, the Path of the Arahats ("worthy ones"), of those saintly beings who, having realized the Truths, have become free from all desire for continued personal existence, whether in a material or spiritual form; free from all

pride, self-righteousness, error, and ignorance; able to see and value things as they really are, and filled with tender pity and regard and exalted spiritual love for all.

Arrived at the end of the fourth Path, the Arahats obtain and enjoy its fruit. As Dr. Thomas has translated it:

Destroyed is the old, the new has not arisen;
They with their thought not set on future being,
The seeds destroyed, desire not germinated,
Like as this lamp the wise are thus extinguished.

Karma is exhausted; desire is at an end. This extinction of sin and desire, this complete cleansing of the mind and heart, this sublimely blissful state is *Nirvana*!

Nirvana is not nothingness. It is not annihilation. These are Western misconceptions, and have always been denied by Buddhists.

Nirvana is what Salvation is to the Christian, what absorption in Brahma is to the Hindu. It is the one unchanging thing among all changing things. But as it is beyond them, it cannot be described in any terms drawn from our experience. It is known only to the Arahats, who are released and who realize it at last.

Buddhist Beatitudes. There is no telling how many or how few of the human race have managed to reach the fourth stage of the Path—to become an Arahats. Most Buddhists count themselves happy indeed if they can enter on one of the earlier stages, thus lightening the karma that will be theirs in the existences that lie ahead. Those who enrol in the Buddhist order have taken a great forward step towards the consummation of this goal of all their striving, but the ordinary layman cannot be expected to practise the austerities and the abnegations required of a professional ascetic. For those laymen who want to be Buddhists in the ordinary walks of life there are directions of a more general and far less exacting character. Such, for instance, are the “supreme blessings,” which Rhys Davids described as the Buddhist Beatitudes:

Not to serve the foolish
But to serve the wise;
To honour those worthy of honour;
These are a supreme blessing!

To support father and mother,
To cherish wife and child,
To follow a peaceful calling;
These are a supreme blessing!

To bestow alms and live righteously,
To give help to kindred,
Deeds which cannot be blamed;
These are a supreme blessing!

To abhor, and cease from sin,
Abstinence from strong drink,
Not to be weary in well-doing;
These are a supreme blessing!

Reverence and lowliness,
Contentment and gratitude,
The hearing of the Law at due seasons;
These are a supreme blessing!

Self-restraint and purity,
The knowledge of the noble Truths,
The realization of Nirvana . . .
These are a supreme blessing!

Here are a few " Scripture verses " which may bear comparison with the loftiest sayings of any of the world religions:

For never in this world does hatred cease by hatred;
Hatred ceases by love; this is always its nature.

Not where others fail, or do or leave undone,
The wise should notice what himself has done or left undone.

One may conquer a thousand thousand men in battle,
But he who conquers himself alone is the greatest victor.

Let a man make himself what he preaches to others;
The well-subdued may subdue others; one's self, indeed, is hard to tame.

Let us live happily then, not hating those who hate us!
Let us live free from hatred among men who hate!

Let a man overcome anger by kindness, evil by good;
Let him conquer the stingy by a gift, the liar by truth.

Let him speak the truth, let him not yield to anger;
Let him give when asked, even from the little he has! ¹

Moral Rules for Laymen. There are five moral commandments which are binding on every Buddhist, whether he be a layman or a wearer of the yellow robe of the mendicant, viz. not to destroy life; not to steal, but only to accept what is given; to refrain from unlawful sexual intercourse; not to tell lies, but to be truthful, trustworthy, and reliable, not deceiving people; and to avoid all intoxicating liquors. In addition to these, which are put into the

¹ Rhys Davids, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

mouth of Buddha himself and so have a supreme sanction, there are three others that complete the "Eight Precepts" and are enjoined upon laymen on fast or Sabbath days, viz. to eat only once a day and not at all after nightfall; to refrain from occasions of dancing, singing, music, shows, and the use of garlands, scents, and other objects of personal adornment; and to sleep only on a low bed (since a high bed is a sign of luxury and ostentation), or on a couch or a mat of hay. Furthermore, the good layman should maintain his father and mother in a just manner and should practise a just trade.

Another summary of the moral code takes the form of the "Ten Sins." Three of the body: taking life, theft, unlawful sexual intercourse. Four of speech: lying, slander, abuse or swearing, vain conversation. Three of the mind: covetousness, malice, and scepticism, by which is meant the denial of everything in this world and the next, Buddha and the Law, birth, reincarnation, and existence, here and hereafter.

One of the best-known statements of Buddhist ethics is the exhortation to Sigalaka, a composition in poetry and in prose that belongs probably to the middle years of Buddha's ministry. Buddha, we are told, early one morning left the monastery in Rajagaha where he was staying and went into the town with his begging bowl. On the way thither he met Sigalaka, the householder's son, who with his clothes and hair wet was performing the magic ceremony of warding off ill-luck by worshipping all the quarters from which it might come, east and south and west and north, the nadir and the zenith of the heavens. "Why are you, my son, worshipping the quarters?" asked Buddha; and when the young man replied that it was because his father had so commanded him, the Lord (as Buddha is styled) told him that the way to cover the "six quarters" is to obey the moral laws, and to refrain from the six things that lead to loss of wealth, viz. addiction to strong drink, frequenting the streets at untimely hours, visiting feasts, gaming, bad friends, and laziness. These things give rise to visible loss of wealth, quarrels, diseases, ill-fame, immodesty, and a weakened intelligence. Just why and how, Buddha went on to explain.

"There are these dangers in addiction to frequenting the streets at untimely hours" (I am quoting from Dr. Thomas's translation, as in earlier pages): "He is unprotected and unguarded himself, his wife and children are unprotected and unguarded, his property is unprotected and unguarded, he is suspected in the case

of misdeeds being committed, false report about him spreads, he becomes treated as responsible for many unhappy things."

If a man goes to feasts, where dancing is going on, singing, music, the reciting of tales, the tambour, the drum, he will waste his time as well as leave his house unguarded.

If he indulges in gaming, he incurs enmity if he wins; and if he loses, laments his lost wealth. There is visible loss of wealth. When he attends an assembly his word is not believed, he is despised by his friends and companions, he is not welcome at weddings; and as a gambler the fellow is no good for keeping a wife.

If a man keeps bad company, his friends and companions are cheats, drunkards, hard drinkers, swindlers, tricksters, men of violence.

If he is addicted to laziness, "it is too cold," he says, and does not do his work; or "it is too hot, too late, too early, I am too hungry, I am too full." As he thus lives with many duties to do, his wealth not yet produced does not come in, and that which had been produced goes to destruction.

Buddha on Friendship. The Master, the Happy One (the discourse continues) spoke further :

There is what is called a drinking-friend, there is one who says, "Hail, friend"; he who is a companion in useful things is a friend.

Sleeping after sunrise, courting the wives of others, making enmities, unprofitable conduct, bad friends, and great miserliness, these six things ruin a man.

A bad friend, a bad companion, being given to bad conduct (through these) in this world and the next a man is ruined. Dice and women, drink, dancing and song, dreaming in the daytime, untimely going about, bad friends, and great miserliness, these things ruin a man.

They play with dice, they drink strong drink, they go after others' wives; associating with the low and not with the old, he becomes low like the moon in the dark half of the month.

A drinker without wealth and poor, thirsty he goes to the drinking place to drink; as though into water he sinks into debt, he will soon make no family for himself.

It is not one whose practice is to sleep by day, who looks upon night as the time to rise, who is ever drinking and a drunkard, who is fit to live in a house.

Too cold, too hot, too late, they say; thus their work is left undone; wealth leaves those men.

He who recks of cold and heat no more than a straw, doing a man's deeds, he is not deprived of happiness.

Then follows a description of friends false and true. A false friend is one who takes all he can, wants much for little, does his duty through fear, and is attentive for the sake of profit. The mere talker is a false friend, since he is friendly about things in the past and about things in the future; he sympathizes about things that are useless, and points out that unluckily he cannot do anything when something is wanted in the present. He who says what is meant to please is a false friend too, for he advises what is bad and not what is good, praises a man to his face and disparages him behind his back. Companions in drinking, feasting, and the like are likewise bad friends. The good friend, on the other hand, is one who is good at heart, one who is a help, the same in happiness as in pain, who shows compassion and what is profitable. Such a friend looks after a man and his property when he has been careless, is a refuge in case of danger, and in case of need offers to lend twice what he has been asked; he keeps his friend's secret, rejoices at his gain and does not desert him in misfortune, and even sacrifices his own life for his friend's sake. Furthermore, he restrains him from evil, exhorts him to do good, informs him of things he has not heard of, and points out the way to heaven.¹

Then, returning to the original subject of discussion, Buddha explained that in his system of life and thought the six quarters should not be regarded as insentient and uncaring regions of the universe, but human flesh and blood. The eastern quarter, he said, should be known as the mother and father, the southern as the teachers, the western as wife and children, the northern as friends and companions, the nadir as slaves and workpeople, and the zenith as ascetics and Brahmins.

Compendium of Moral Obligations. What follows makes a complete code of Buddhist ethics, which has been conveniently summed up by Rhys Davids in a form that is not too long to be given in full:

1. *Parents and Children*

Parents should:

1. Restrain their children from vice.
2. Train them in virtue.
3. Have them taught arts or sciences.
4. Provide them with suitable wives or husbands.
5. Give them their inheritance.

¹ Thomas, *Early Buddhist Scriptures*, pp. 142-148.

The child should say:

1. I will support them who supported me.
2. I will perform family duties incumbent on them.
3. I will guard their property.
4. I will make myself worthy to be their heir.
5. When they are gone, I will honour their memory.

2. *Pupils and Teachers*

The pupil should honour his teachers:

1. By rising in their presence.
2. By ministering to them.
3. By obeying them.
4. By supplying their wants.
5. By attention to instruction.

The teacher should show his affection to his pupils:

1. By training them in all that is good.
2. By teaching them to hold knowledge fast.
3. By instruction in science and lore.
4. By speaking well of them to their friends and companions.
5. By guarding them from danger.

3. *Husband and Wife*

The husband should cherish his wife:

1. By treating her with respect.
2. By treating her with kindness.
3. By being faithful to her.
4. By causing her to be honoured by others.
5. By giving her suitable ornaments and clothes.

The wife should show her affection for her husband:

1. She orders her household aright.
2. She is hospitable to kinsmen and friends.
3. She is a chaste wife.
4. She is a thrifty housekeeper.
5. She shows skill and diligence in all she has to do.

4. *Friends and Companions*

The honourable man should minister to his friends:

1. By giving presents.
2. By courteous speech.
3. By promoting their interest.
4. By treating them as his equals.
5. By sharing with them his prosperity.

They should show their attachment to him :

1. By watching over him when he is off his guard.
2. By guarding his property when he is careless.
3. By offering him a refuge in danger.
4. By adhering to him in misfortune.
5. By showing kindness to his family.

5. *Masters and Servants*

The master should provide for the welfare of his dependants :

1. By apportioning work to them according to their strength.
2. By supplying suitable food and wages.
3. By tending them in sickness.
4. By sharing with them unusual delicacies.
5. By now and then granting them holidays.

They should show their attachment to him as follows :

1. They rise before him.
2. They retire later to rest.
3. They are content with what is given them.
4. They work cheerfully and thoroughly.
5. They speak well of him.

6. *Laymen and those devoted to Religion*

The honourable man ministers to mendicants and Brahmans :

1. By affection in act.
2. By affection in words.
3. By affection in thoughts.
4. By giving them a ready welcome.
5. By supplying their temporal wants.

They should show their affection to him :

1. By dissuading him from vice.
2. By exhorting him to virtue.
3. By feeling kindly towards him.
4. By instructing him in religion.
5. By clearing up his doubts.
6. By pointing the way to heaven.

Well may Rhys Davids remark, how happy would have been the village or the clan on the banks of the Ganges, where the people were full of the kindly spirit of fellow-feeling, the noble spirit of justice, which breathes through these naïve and simple sayings.

Buddhist Monks. In Buddhism there are no clergy, since there are no priests. But there are large numbers of mendicants or monks, men who have joined the Order or Sangha that Buddha



BENARES, SACRED CITY OF INDIA

To bathe in the waters of Mother Ganges is to millions of Hindus a religious duty and a passport to a more advantageous and happy incarnation.

founded, because in so doing they cut some of the ties that bind them to earth. Freed from the possession of wealth, family cares and responsibilities, removed from the temptations of sense, they find in the asceticism of the Sangha an aid to their faltering steps along the Path. But, it should be emphasized, the Order is not a priesthood; it is open to all to join it or to leave it, provided they comply with the established forms.

Monks or mendicants (*bhikshus*) are required as novices to obey Ten Rules, nine of which are practically the same as the eight Fast-day Rules of laymen; the tenth is refraining from accepting gold or silver.

Originally the life of a *bhikshu* was one of severe self-denial. To exist he was required to beg, standing silently outside each house and hut in turn, and accepting with a pious thank-you whatever was placed in his wooden bowl. He had to dress in rags from the dust-heap, made up into three garments of dull orange colour. He had to shave his head completely. He was enjoined to choose as his residence a grove in the forest, or a garden, or a cave in the mountains, and to sleep only at the foot of a tree—although even in Buddha's day the piety of laymen provided for his men of the yellow robe permanent buildings or monasteries. The *bhikshu* was permitted one medicine only—decomposed urine. He was allowed to possess only eight things, the eight requisites: his three robes, a girdle, alms-bowl, razor, needle, and water-strainer, through which to pour everything he drank, so as to avoid the accidental destruction of some living thing. This vow of poverty is still required, but monks in their corporate capacity may possess books and even land and houses.

Altogether there are 227 rules which a monk has to obey, and these are read out at the fortnightly meetings of the community. Four of the offences involve expulsion: indulgence in any form of sexual intercourse, stealing, taking life or persuading to suicide, and false boasting of spiritual attainments. For the rest, some require periods of penance, followed shortly by reinstatement, e.g. minor sexual offences, insubordination, etc.; others require expiation, forfeiture of possessions improperly obtained, confession, etc., by way of punishment for the use of bad language, indecent conduct towards women and nuns, errors in dress and daily behaviour, in preaching to the people, and so on. As for the monk's daily round, he is required to rise before dawn, wash, sweep out his hut; go on a round of begging for himself and the brotherhood;

offer flowers before the shrine or statue of the Buddha; study the sacred books; meditate for hours on end on what they mean, on love, pity, joy, impurity, and serenity. Then as dusk draws on he sweeps the sacred precincts, lights a lamp, listens to the teaching of his superior, or reads again from the scriptures. Finally the day is rounded off with confession to his superior.

Mahayana. Not many years after Buddha's missionaries had set about the conversion of India, it was realized that the pure teaching of the Master had little attraction for the great mass of the population. The educated, the thinkers, the lovers of philosophical speculation and metaphysical discourse, found much in the new faith to their taste; and many of the Brahmans in particular became ardent Buddhists, while still remaining adherents of the ancient religion. But the ignorant multitude, the men and women of the lower castes and of no caste at all, were in need of something much more homely, more lovable, more capable of being understood and adored. To satisfy these natures relic-worship was very early resorted to, as may be seen from the monuments erected by Asoka at the sites of Buddha's birth and death, the places where his remains had been deposited, and where alleged portions of his body were preserved. But within another century or two a new type of Buddhism was taking shape, one which is called Mahayana Buddhism. Mahayana is the "Great Career." Burnouf translated it "Great Vehicle," because one meaning of *yana* is "vehicle," and he found in one of the later discourses a parable in which the three possible careers open to the followers of Buddha are compared to three chariots.

The first of these careers is that of the ordinary disciple, whose moral behaviour is in accordance with the Eight Precepts described above. The second career is that of the private Buddha, a saintly being who discovers the Truths for himself but does not preach. The third career is that of one who aims not merely at attaining Nirvana for himself, but should train himself to become a Buddha, and preach the Doctrine to countless others. One who undertakes this career is a *bodhisattva*, "a being destined for enlightenment."

The doctrine of this third career is really much older than Mahayana. What distinguishes Mahayana is that each individual is to be a potential Buddha, that all should make this career their aim, and when they have attained it should devote the merits they have secured to the benefiting of all creatures. It was a noble ideal, but it need hardly be said that not everybody undertook the task

of realizing it. Not everyone in a given existence *could* undertake it, but only those who had already acquired the "roots of goodness." Once embarked on the bodhisattva career, which may extend through many lives, the aspirant passes through ten stages, and, as he advances, practises the six virtues or Perfections of almsgiving, morality, patience, heroism, meditation, and wisdom. When all these Buddha-qualities have been mastered and acquired, the bodhisattva is confronted by only one more stage—to be reborn for the last time and become a Buddha. But here many bodhisattvas have deliberately stopped short because, as Professor Heinrich Hackmann has written,¹ they have been filled with infinite pity for the suffering world. In their love and compassion they have preferred to remain in a position in which they can still help sufferers in their times of need, and therefore they have postponed for a time the last stage to the rank of Buddha. From where they dwell in the heavens they look down in love and compassion on the world of suffering beings, and from time to time, in their desire to succour the oppressed, they leave their heavenly seats and appear on earth in all kinds of incarnations as a company of ministering angels. Numerous legends recount the deeds of mercy in which the bodhisattvas have manifested their inexhaustible and unwearied kindness and helpfulness. Their love, "which is infinite pity, glows and throbs and wins the heart. It is bent on alleviating all actual suffering, bodily and spiritual. The bodhisattva intervenes and saves from dangers and from death. He protects the weak and helpless, frees the captive, fights plague and famine, consoles the sorrowful, and comforts those who are ready to despair." Bodhisattvas are energetic beings, full of practical help in face of the sufferings of life. They have the qualities of the knightly hero, who was ever ready to ride forth to aid the oppressed.

Nor is this all. Not only are the bodhisattvas always ready to aid and to bless, but they possess the power to convey the worshipper at death to one or other of the universes where a Buddha is preaching—to a heaven which, though not the final stage, is the place where the worshipper becomes a bodhisattva himself. Most find that blissful prospect sufficient, and do not dream of Buddhahood.

The conception of the bodhisattva, Professor Hackmann goes on to show, has profoundly changed the moral side of Buddhist teaching. In original Buddhism the chief end was one's own salvation,

¹ Art. "Buddhism," *Religions of the World*, ed. by Prof. Carl Clemen (Harrap, 1931), p. 314.

growing ripe for Nirvana; and he who had attained this, the arahat, the perfected one, had nothing more to do. But in Mahayana Buddhism we have the ideal of a bodhisattva who labours unweariedly in the cause of others. The adherent of Mahayana finds here the pattern of what life should be, and receives the impulse to make that pattern life his own. Love and readiness to help become the true aim of the faithful follower of Buddha; men are summoned to be kind and unselfish towards their suffering fellows.

Small wonder that a system of bodhisattva-worship arose, in which the numerous bodhisattvas have been, and are, revered very much as are the gods of Hinduism. One of the most popular is Avalokitesvara, who conveys his worshippers to the "Happy Land" presided over by Amitabha Buddha, one of the many Buddhas each of whom has his own heavenly universe. Another is Kuanyin, or Kwannon, the Chinese Goddess of Mercy.

Mahayana is the prevalent form of Buddhism in the Himalayan countries (Nepal, Bhutan, Kashmir), in Tibet, Mongolia, some parts of Siberia, and in China, Manchuria, Korea, Japan, Annam, and Cochin China. Hinayana (the "Little Vehicle," as distinguished from the "Great Vehicle" of Mahayana), the older form that may be described as Buddhism without bodhisattvas, is confined to the southern group of Buddhist countries, viz. Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Cambodia; and to some small communities in the East Indies.

Lamaism. In Tibet and the adjoining lands Mahayana Buddhism prevails in the form of Lamaism, so called from the Tibetan word *lama*, a priest.

Lamaism holds most firmly to the doctrine of transmigration, but many Buddhas are recognized, each with his heaven or Buddhaland, where his own particular worshippers and disciples are prepared for their ultimate salvation; and entrance to these paradises is to be secured by "good works," particularly the reciting of prayers and charms, the turning of prayer-wheels, and the erection of "Trees of the Law"—lofty poles from which float flags emblazoned with the words *Om Manipadme hum*, "The Jewel is in the Lotus," believed by Tibetans to constitute a mystic charm of the utmost potency.

The lay and spiritual heads of Tibet, the Dalai Lama at Lhasa and the Tashi Lama at Shigatse, are supposed to be incarnations, the one of a bodhisattva and the other of a Buddha. The abbots of the Tibetan monasteries (of which there are a great many, some containing several thousand monks) are also supposed to be incarnations of divinities or minor saints who have played a part in Buddhist

history and have been found a place in the Buddhist pantheon.

Buddhism was introduced into Tibet by Chinese missionaries in A.D. 640, but the real stimulus to its development came from India and the Himalayan countries. The most important of the Indian Buddhists who crossed the mountains to take the gospel to the benighted Tibetans was one Padma Sambhava, who is supposed to have begun his preaching about A.D. 749; and he exercised so extraordinary an influence that he is often regarded as the founder of Lamaism. Everywhere in Tibet there are images of him; and although he is only a saint, he is revered, even worshipped, quite as often as is Buddha Sakyamuni himself.

Padma Sambhava came from an India in which Tantrism had secured a firm hold, and there is a marked Tantric element in Lamaism—belief in the mystic significance of sounds, colours, numbers, series, geometrical figures, and so on, and a good deal of sexual symbolism. Each Buddha and bodhisattva has been provided with a wife; the attainment of Nirvana is given a sexual complexion; and in some sects coition is practised as an image of man's union with the divine.

* * *

There is one feature in particular of Buddhism, of whatever school or country or age, that is worthy of mention and commendation, and that is the entire absence of a persecuting spirit, of the spirit of intolerance. Buddhism is the most friendly of all the world religions. Its impelling motive is compassion, and genuine compassion is not to be confined or restrained. All men suffer from the disease of existence—and all men may be cured by the spiritual medicine that Buddhism offers, by following the Path that Buddha mapped out. The sword has no place or function in Buddhism.

Through love and pity Buddha has made a stupendous conquest of humanity, and, conquering, has received, as Sir Edwin Arnold has expressed it, the love and gratitude and fervent worship of Asia. "Forests of flowers are daily laid upon his stainless shrines, and countless millions of lips daily repeat the formula, *I take refuge in Buddha!*"

CHAPTER VII

JAINISM

JAINISM is the religion of about a million and a half of the 380 millions who inhabit the Indian peninsula. But, though numerically insignificant, the Jains contain a large proportion of well-to-do people, and these possess the influence that wealth can give. Furthermore, they are educated above the ordinary, and their philosophy is one that is not without its appeal even to Western minds.

Jain, or more properly Jaina, is derived from Jina, "a conqueror," and in this connection it means one who has overcome not nations but human passions: anger, pride, deceitfulness, and greed—the major passions—and worry, fear, joy and sorrow, liking and disliking for material objects, disgust, and "sex." The title of "the Jina" is applied in particular to Mahavira, the twenty-fourth and last of a succession of Tirthankaras (great saints or sanctified teachers), who are regarded as the founders of the faith. Mahavira and his immediate predecessor (who was, however, separated from him by 250 years) are admitted to have been historical figures.

Mahavira was an elder contemporary of Buddha, and it is a remarkable fact that both Buddhism and Jainism should have had their rise in the same part of India at about the same time. Born about 599 B.C., Mahavira became an ascetic at the age of thirty. The next twelve years he spent "in a squatting position, with joined heels, exposing himself to the heat of the sun, with the knees high and the head low, in deep meditation, in the midst of abstract meditation," until he became "omniscient and comprehending all objects." In this state, "he knew all conditions of the world, of gods, men, and demons; whence they come, where they go, whether they are born as men or animals, or become gods or hell-beings; their food, drink, doings, desires, open and secret deeds, their conversation and gossip, and the thoughts of their minds; he saw and knew all conditions in the whole world of living things."¹

¹ See *Introduction to Jainism*, by Herbert Warren, in *The Eleven Religions*, ed. by Dr. S. G. Champion (Routledge, 1944). Also *The Life of Mahavira*, by Manak Chand Jaini (Allahabad, 1908).

Thus he became a Tirthankara, the ideal human being who is omniscient and has entirely overcome the human passions listed above. He never gets into a rage or so much as frowns; he has no attachments to things or persons; he hates nothing and nobody; he is never sorrowful, although he is full of pity and compassion; he never laughs or jokes; he has no positive likes or dislikes; he is absolutely devoid of fear; not a trace of sex-passion is left alive within him. So completely is he separated from the things of sense that (so Jains believe) he never sleeps. If he were to fall asleep it would be taken as a sign that he is not a Tirthankara. There are eighteen qualifications of a Tirthankara, and Mahavira possessed them all.

For thirty years after attaining omniscience, Mahavira preached. Then, at the age of seventy-two, he finally entered into Nirvana (527 B.C.).

It used to be thought that Jainism was an offshoot of Buddhism, but, if any reliance may be placed on the Jain chronology, Jainism is much the older. It has certain resemblances to Buddhism—for example, the gods are so cold-shouldered as to be practically non-existent, life is held to be an evil to be escaped, and Nirvana is the goal—but the early Buddhists saw in it a rival faith and strongly opposed it. Moreover, its teaching in regard to the soul is very different from that of Buddhism.

In the Jain system the soul is not a “bundle of khandas,” as in the Buddhist view. Nor is it a portion of the Universal Soul of Hinduism. It is individual; it always has been individual and always will be. Like the universe, it was never created, but has always existed. Like it, too, it can never be destroyed.

This eternal individual soul can be embodied in four conditions, viz. as a human being, as an animal, in one of the many hells, and in one of the many heavens. When a man dies, his soul is immediately re-embodied in one of these four conditions, unless and until it has managed to escape from the bondage in which it is held—bondage to matter. When the last traces of matter are thrown aside, the soul achieves final emancipation; it reaches and remains to all eternity in a condition of omniscience and superlative bliss, in what may be called Nirvana.

Both Buddhism and Jainism are “escapist.” They both teach that the supreme aim of life should be to escape from it, from the chain of rebirths. But whereas Buddhism teaches that this will be achieved when desire, craving, cleaving, is completely extinguished,

Jainism declares that the road to Nirvana is by way of exhaustion of karma, by which would seem to be meant the material garment of the soul.

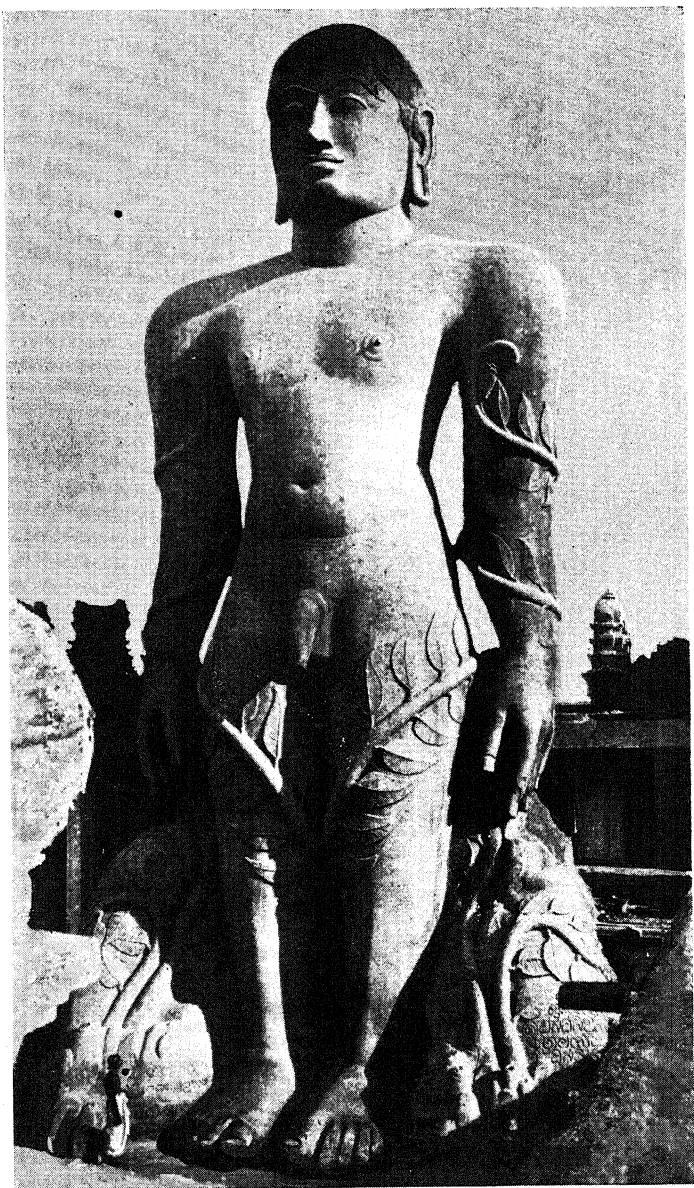
Jain ethics are devised and directed to prevent the formation of new karma, and to annihilate the karma that is already formed and is carried on from life to life. The aim of the good Jain life is to secure the release of the soul from the prison-house of the body. How is this to be done? Primarily by the practice of *Ahimsa*—the principle of non-injury to any living creature. "This is the quintessence of wisdom: not to kill anything."

Jains classify living beings according to the number of sense-organs they are supposed to possess. Lowest of all is vegetation, since it has only the sense of touch; then come those with touch and taste; with touch, taste, and smell; with touch, taste, smell, and sight; with touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing. Some in the last category have "mind" as well, e.g. oxen, sheep, pigs, fowls, and fish. None of these will a Jain eat. Indeed, Jains are the strictest vegetarians, living on "one-sensed life" only—nuts, fruit, and vegetables. Even potatoes are prohibited, since it is believed that they are the home of minute forms of life.

It need hardly be said that one never finds a butcher or a fish-monger who is a Jain; not a gunmaker nor a brewer (since there is destruction of life in the process of fermentation). But there are many Jain merchants and money-lenders, landed proprietors, lawyers, and bankers; and they are not slow to use the influence they have gained in these influential capacities to secure the prohibition in the Indian States of animal sacrifices on the sacred days of their religion. So careful are they themselves not to take life that they sometimes wear veils in front of their mouths so as to prevent the involuntary swallowing and slaying of an adventurous insect, and for the same reason jars and jugs containing liquid are usually kept covered.

The Twelve Vows. *Ahimsa*—to refrain from taking life—is the first and foremost of the vows the Jain must take. Just what it means is expressed by Mr. Herbert Warren in his "Jainism."¹ One must not slay one's fellow-man in war or when one's blood is up in private quarrel, however great the provocation. Capital punishment is ruled out. One should not kill animals for sport or for food, in vivisection or on the altar of sacrifice. One should not even "swat that fly." The vow applies also to acts which may not

¹ *Jainism in Western Garb, as a Solution to Life's Great Problems* (Madras, 1912).



GOMATESVARA, A JAIN TIRTHANKARA

The colossal statue at Sravana-Belgola, Mysore state, of a saint of the Digambara (nudist) sect of Jains. It is some 60 feet high, and was carved nearly a thousand years ago.

actually kill but none the less cause unnecessary pain, such as cruel beating, maiming or branding, overloading a beast of burden, withholding food and drink unreasonably.

The second vow is to refrain from telling lies and making false statements, whether out of fear or hatred, pride or anger, and also from divulging the secrets of another.

The third is to refrain from theft. This includes the receiving of stolen goods, smuggling, the use of false weights and measures, and counterfeiting money.

The fourth vow is to control the sex passion and avoid sexual intercourse as much as possible. There is a special Jain teaching "that in every act of sexual intercourse 900,000 living beings, very minute, of the shape of the human being, and having the five senses, but no mind, are generated and killed." Thus chastity would seem to be an expression of the principle of Ahimsa.

Obviously the man who is living with his wife in the ordinary circumstances of everyday life cannot be expected to be rigidly celibate. But he may be expected to remain a widower if his wife dies, to exercise absolute chastity during the daytime, and generally to keep as far from temptation as possible. With this end in view a number of rules are laid down. A man is advised to have as little to do with women as circumstances will permit. He should take no part in lustful conversation (as we should put it, he should avoid listening to and retelling smutty stories). He should refrain from stimulating food and drink. He should not live in a room with thin walls next to one occupied by a married couple.

The same rules apply to women's conduct so far as may be.

•The fifth vow is to limit one's desires for possessions. The aim should be to possess the minimum of goods required for life, and not to desire them for their own sake or for the power that possessions give.

These five are known as the "lesser vows," and they are binding alike on the Jain layman and the monk or ascetic—for Jainism, like Buddhism, is a monastic religion—but the latter must apply them very much more strictly. With him there must be in particular no killing whatever. He must watch every step for fear of killing an ant or a beetle. He must scrutinize his meagre fare with a fearful intensity in case a maggot may be there. He must strain the water he drinks to make sure of not swallowing a gnat. In his sacred books he learns that he who lights a fire kills living beings; so the obvious thing to do is not to light one.

When a Jain monk takes the vows, he declares that he will become "one who owns no house, no property, no sons, no cattle, who eats only what others give him: I shall commit no sinful action. I renounce to accept anything that has not been given." He is required to wander from place to place, with no settled habitation, save in the rainy season, when life seems to such an extent that it is impossible to move without stepping on some tiny creature or other.

Stealing and lying are not to be so much as thought of in the case of a monk. Nor must he indulge at any time in sexual intercourse. He must ever and everywhere maintain the strictest purity.

In addition to these five "lesser vows" the Jain (monk or layman) who is intent on spiritual progress is required to take another seven vows, which restrict his bodily movements; limit the number of things that he may use and the people he may meet; enjoin the greatest care in thought and word and deed; require him to sit for hours at a time in immobile meditation, to remain in one room or house for a day once a year at least, and to fast for twelve, twenty-four, forty-eight, or seventy-two hours at a stretch, and finally, to offer hospitality to a Jain monk or, failing a monk, a pious layman.

Rules of Conduct. Jains see life as a step in a stairway whose foot is far away in the indiscernible and whose top is somewhere up near the stars. Each life may be a step up or a step down; and in order that it may be the first, the Jain thinkers have worked out a series of Rules of Conduct—all based on love, sympathy, fellow-feeling, pity—by which the person wishing to make spiritual progress should abide.

There are thirty-five of these rules, and among them are the following. A Jain should engage in some kind of business, trade, or profession which is not of an ignoble or degrading character. By it he should support himself and those dependent on him, and try to have something over to relieve the distress of those not so fortunate as himself. The layman should marry, unless he can control his sexual nature in a state of celibacy. He should steer clear of gambling and opportunities for immorality. He should keep a strict watch on himself as regards anger, pride, lust, greed, boasting. He should live in a country where the laws are kept, and amongst virtuous people. He should dress according to his means, but not in a showy fashion. His expenses should be in proportion to his income. He should keep good company, avoid slander, respect his parents, eschew gluttony and indeed any excess, avoid giving offence, and, generally speaking, conform with established customs,

read the scriptures every day, maintain a critical attitude towards the beliefs, opinions, religions, of others, and do his best to resolve any doubts to which these may give rise. He must never lose an opportunity of doing good.¹

Moral Maxims. Jainism has a very considerable sacred literature, much of it of very high ethical quality. The Golden Rule, or something very like it, is to be found there: "A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated," and "In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self, and should therefore refrain from inflicting upon others such injury as would appear undesirable to us if inflicted upon ourselves."

Among the moral maxims most worthy of quotation are:

Difficult to conquer is oneself. But when that is conquered, everything is conquered.

Though a man should conquer thousands and thousands of valiant foes, greater will be his victory if he conquers nobody but himself. Fight with yourself; why fight with external foes? He who conquers himself through himself will obtain happiness.

Subdue yourself; for the self is difficult to subdue. If your self is subdued, you will be happy in this world and in the next.

Subdue wrath by forgiveness, conquer vanity by humbleness, fraud by straightforwardness, and vanquish greed through contentment.

That which is given once is received back a thousand times.

Do no sinful act nor cause others to do one.

In this world of misery, disease, old age, and death, there is no other protection, refuge, or help, than our own practice of the truth. Others are powerless; as we sow we reap. All men in due time must suffer the fruit of their works.²

The religious observances, five in number, are stated to be: walking carefully, so as not to hurt any living being; speaking reverently and without hurting anyone's feelings; taking only pure food not specially prepared for the saint; careful handling of the few things, e.g. the water-bowl, brush, and scriptures, which ascetics may keep; the exercise of great care as to where to answer the calls of nature.

There are two main sects in Jainism, dating from a division in the third century B.C. These are the Digambaras and the Svetambaras. The former refuse to recognize the sacred books of the latter as canonical, declaring that the canonical books were lost

¹ Herbert Warren, *Jainism*, pp. 64-76.

² *The Eleven Religions*, pp. 214-221.

some time after Mahavira's death. The Digambaras also maintain that no woman can attain Nirvana: a woman must be reborn as a man before she can hope to qualify. Another characteristic of the Digambaras used to be complete nudity; but the shocked Moslems among whom they live have compelled them to conform to their ideas of decency, at least to the extent of wearing a loin-cloth. Jain statues, however, are often completely nude.

Jain temples are numbered among the architectual masterpieces of the Indian peoples. In them stand images of the Tirthankaras, before which are performed each day ceremonies of worship very similar to those of Hinduism. The Tirthankaras are adored as pure and perfect souls, not because the worshippers expect favours from them, but as a devout and beneficial meditation, an act of homage, an expression of the resolve to follow in their footsteps, and of the sure and certain belief that the liberation and freedom from pain that they have won is capable of being won by all.

"The soul," the Jain devout repeat after their evening reading in their holy books, "is the maker and non-maker, and itself makes happiness and misery, is its own friend and its own foe, decides its own condition good or evil, is its own river Veyarana." Veyarana is a river of torment in hell; so that in effect this means, "Thyself art hell."

CHAPTER VIII

SIKHISM

SIKHISM is the most recently established of all the faiths discussed in this book. It was founded towards the end of the fifteenth century of our era, and to-day it claims between four and five million adherents, who live for the most part in the Punjab and the adjoining districts of north-western India.

The founder of Sikhism was Baba (or Father) Nanak, who was born in a village near Lahore in A.D. 1469. He was a Hindu of humble origin, his father being a village accountant. His first teacher was a Mohammedan, so that very early he became acquainted with both the great religions of the Indian masses. He seems to have been a thoughtful youth, a keen observer, a ready listener, and possessed of an incipient religious sense which led him to seek the company of the fakirs who infested the countryside. So fond was he of these religious fanatics that he neglected his secular duties, and would spend nights with them in their retreats, singing hymns of praise to God. His father gave him money to start in some small-scale business, but the boy of fifteen gave it all away to the poor. Then he was found a post in the household of a Moslem gentleman; but here, too, he displayed the same quixotic generosity, keeping but a fraction of his salary and distributing the rest as alms. About this time he was found a wife, by whom he had two sons; and in due course he became his master's steward. But when about thirty-five he underwent a tremendous spiritual experience. According to tradition he was performing his religious ablutions in the river when he felt himself suddenly transported through the air to the gates of Paradise. There a goblet of water was given him to drink, and he heard the voice of the Lord commanding him to go out into the world and preach a new religion. "Go thou, repeat My Name," said the voice, "and cause other people to repeat it. Remain uncontaminated by the world. Continue steadfast in the Name, in almsgiving, in ablutions, in service, and in remembrance of Me. I have given to thee My own Name. Do thou this work."

Recovering from his trance, Nanak made the declaration that

became the key-note of his religion: "There is no Hindu; there is no Muslim," and at once entered upon the task of converting both Hindus and Mohammedans to what he intended should be a middle way. In the course of years he travelled through the length and breadth of India with one devoted companion, Mardana, who accompanied Nanak's songs on the rebec, a kind of primitive fiddle. It is stated that he not only visited Ceylon, but travelled westward as far as Mecca. Everywhere he went he made many converts, but he came home to die. This was in 1538 or 1539. An old legend tells that Moslems and Hindus contested for the honour of disposing of his body, the latter claiming it for the funeral pyre and the former demanding that they should be permitted to bury it. But when they lifted the sheet that covered the corpse, there was nothing there but a heap of flowers.

It has been pointed out that an identical story has been told about Kabir, the famous Indian mystic and poet who belonged to the generation before Nanak and anticipated him in his large-hearted and broadminded attempt to effect a fusion of the rival faiths. Nanak may have met Kabir in the course of his wanderings; certainly he was influenced by him in his thought.

Nanak's principles have been reduced to the single and simple formula: the Unity of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

Sikhism is unreservedly and uncompromisingly monotheistic, but its deity is less narrow and more tolerant, more friendly and less terrible, than the Allah of the Muslims. In the Sikh scriptures this Supreme Being is described as having neither colour nor outline, as being neither young nor old, as having no father or mother, as having existed from all eternity. But he is also described as wise, compassionate, generous; he is called the Destroyer of Sorrow, the Cherisher of the Poor, the Friend of Sinners.

There is no suggestion of an Incarnation. God does not stand apart from and outside the world. He is immanent in the world. Each individual human soul in its pure and natural state is part of the Divine Soul, and this earthly pilgrimage is viewed as an attempt to enter once again and for ever into union with God.

Much of the Sikh theology or metaphysics is derived from Hinduism. Nanak carried over into his new religion the typically and essentially Indian doctrines of karma and reincarnation, Maya and Nirvana. A man's works, his karma, determine his condition in subsequent rebirths; what he sows, that he must inevitably reap. Maya, or illusion, deludes him into self-consciousness, into the idea

that there can be any real existence apart from the Divine; thus the soul is prevented from throwing aside its material vesture and merging into the Divine Light, whence it originally emanated. Life follows life, and the soul moves on from one to the next, until the karma is destroyed by finding the One True God. Only thus may the chain of transmigration be broken and Nirvana reached, when the soul finds its Spouse in God.

But if Sikhism takes so much from Hinduism, it repudiates as much or more. Nanak set his face against the caste system, though historically Sikhism has had to seek an accommodation with it. He spurned the ascetic practices such as he had witnessed in his boyhood days. "Religion," he said—he could not write, since he was quite illiterate—"consisteth not in a patched coat, or in a beggar's staff, or in ashes smeared on the body. Religion consisteth not in earrings worn, or a shaven head, or the blowing of horns. Religion consisteth not in mere words. He who looketh on all men as equal deserveth to be called religious."

Religion consisteth not in going abroad and visiting tombs or places of cremation, or of sitting in attitudes of contemplation. Religion consisteth not in roaming in foreign countries, or in bathing at places of pilgrimage.

Abide pure amid the impurities of the world: thus shalt thou find the way of religion.

Nanak bade his Sikhs—Sikh means disciple—to live normal human lives: he himself was, as we have seen, a husband and a father. He advocated the simple life, early rising, and cold baths; he forbade the use of intoxicating drinks, drugs, and tobacco, but allowed meat. Most significant of all, he challenged the current views of woman's position in the world. All human beings are equal in the sight of God, he maintained, irrespective of their caste and race and sex. "It is God who arrangeth marriages," he said once; "He maketh no mistake, and those whom He hath once joined, He joineth for ever." From this it would seem he intended to establish a rule of monogamy. The killing of infant daughters, the marriage of children, the burning alive of widows (*suttee*), and the immurement of women behind the walls of the harem, were all condemned out of hand by the new religion.

Recognition of the mother's part in the training of the young Sikh is to be found in such a passage as this, attributed to one Bhai Gur Das:

A child is conceived by the union of father and mother, and while it is in the womb the mother is full of hope. She abstaineth from

delicacies, and is shy to appear in public. She putteth her feet cautiously on the ground, she carrieth for nine months and suffereth in giving birth to the dear boy. She then nourisheth him with great trouble, and must be careful what she eateth and drinketh. She suckleth, and cautiously giveth him infant's medicine. The parents provide him with clothing and food, and take thought for his betrothal and education. They entrust him to a tutor, and as in duty bound spend their earnings on him. The child should discharge this load of debt to the parents.¹

On Nanak's death he was followed as Guru—spiritual leader or chief priest—by his disciple Angad, who is said to have invented an alphabet, a modification of the Punjabi, which was used henceforth in the writing of the Sikh scriptures. Under the third Guru, Amar Das, the Sikhs began the excavation of the great tank (Lake of Nectar) at Amritsar, which was completed under the fourth Guru, Arjan, who thereupon began the construction in the tank or lake of the Golden Temple. This same Guru Arjan compiled the volume of Sikh hymns known as the Granth Sahib (noble book), which thus became the "Old Testament" of the Sikh Bible.

The religious and secular observances of the Sikhs about this time are described in picturesque fashion by Bhai Gur Das :

The Sikhs rising at the ambrosial hour of morning, bathe. Collecting their thoughts and gently meditating on the unfathomable One . . . they go to the company of saints, and sit with them. They become absorbed in remembering and loving the Word, and sing and hear the Guru's hymns. They pass their time in the love and service and fear of God. They serve the Guru and observe his anniversaries . . . Having read the Sohila (collection of hymns) and made supplication at night, they distribute sacred food. Thus do the holy Sikhs gladly taste the fruit of happiness.

The Sikhs eat little food and drink little water. They speak little and boast not. They sleep little and only in the night, nor are they entangled in worldly love. When they enter a beautiful house they covet it not.

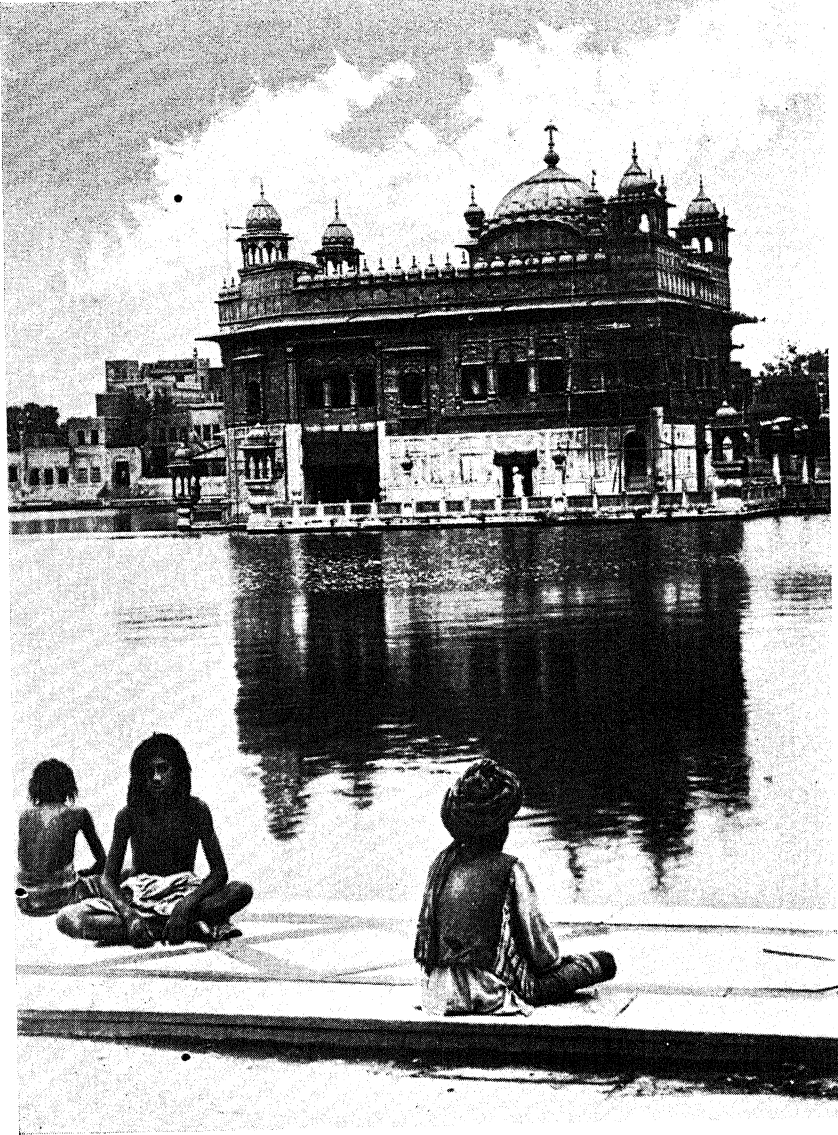
Who are acceptable to God ?

They who have restrained the five evil passions—lust, wrath, covetousness, worldly love, and pride—and they who have embraced the five virtues—truth, contentment, mercy, honesty, and an understanding of the Granth—are acceptable.²

In the Sikh sacred books there are many striking maxims and ethical pronouncements.

¹ See Max. A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion: its Gurus, Sacred Writings, and Authors* (6 vols., Clarendon Press, 1909), vol. iv, p. 270. This is the standard translation of the Granth and the lives of Nanak and his nine successors, and it received the complete approval of the Sikh authorities in India.

² See Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, iv, pp. 252-254.



THE 'POOL OF IMMORTALITY' OF THE SIKHS
The great Golden Temple with its artificial lake at Amritsar, the
spiritual home and political centre of the Sikh fraternity.

God will not ask man of what race he is. He will ask what he has done.

There are four ways by which, with the repetition of God's name, men may reach him. The first is holy companionship, the second truth, the third contentment, and the fourth restraint of the senses. By whichever of these doors a man entereth, whether he be a hermit or a householder, he shall find God.

This is attributed to Nanak himself, as is this:

Make honesty thy steed, truth thy saddle, continence thine equestrian armour; the five virtues thine arrows, and truth thy sword and shield.

Finally, there is the Golden Rule:

"... Treat others as thou wouldst be treated thyself."¹

Complaints of Sikh impiety were made to the great emperor Akbar, but he was too tolerant and understanding to take them seriously. His son and successor Jahangir was fanatical in his devotion to Islam, however, and when the complaints were renewed he gave instructions that all the offending passages should be struck out of the Granth Sahib. Arjan refused point-blank, and in consequence was put to the torture and died—the first of the Guru martyrs. This was in 1606, three years after our Queen Elizabeth's death.

Arjan's son, Har Gobind, who succeeded him as Guru, realized that the time had come for the Sikhs to fight if they wished to survive. He found a ready response. The simple way of life to which the men were accustomed, the eating of meat, their normal family relationships, combined to make them physically strong, stronger than the average Hindu in the provinces round about; and with a little instruction in the use of arms they soon developed into a formidable host. For thirty-five years Har Gobind maintained what was practically an independent principality; and on his death his grandson, Har Rai, continued it for another sixteen years. A boy, and then an old man, succeeded to the guruship. The latter, Teg Bahadur, had the temerity to challenge the emperor Aurangzeb, who had engaged in wholesale religious persecution. The old Sikh offered to demonstrate that his religion was superior to both the persecuting Islam and the persecuted Hinduism. Aurangzeb's reply was to throw the Guru into gaol. The Guru was offered his life and his freedom if he would apostasize to Islam, but he indignantly refused and was put to death in 1675.

This second martyrdom was the final factor that converted a body of religionists into a nation of warriors. The progress from

¹ See *The Eleven Religions*, pp. 257-270.

the pacifism and quietism of Nanak to the military virtues of the Singhs (lions), as the Sikhs were now called,¹ was completed under the tenth and last of the Gurus, Gobind Rai or Gobind Singh. He it was who instituted the Khanda-di-Pahul, the Baptism of the Sword, and established the Khalsa ("the pure"), the brotherhood of the faithful, the Singhs. Within the Khalsa there were no caste distinctions. All were God's soldiers, members of a valorous and devoted society, whose virtues were decidedly military. Loyalty was specially enjoined by Gobind Singh:

Be loyal to your sovereign;
 Leave death and life in the hands of God.
 He who forsaketh his master in battle
 Shall be dishonoured here and condemned hereafter.
 The vultures, knowing him to be disloyal,
 Will not touch, but spurn his flesh.
 He shall not go to heaven hereafter, nor obtain glory here;
 Abundant disgrace shall light upon his head.
 Be assured of this, that human birth shall be profitable to him
 Who loseth his life with his face to the foe,
 For all the drops of blood that fall from his body,
 So many years shall he enjoy the company of his God.

"One should ever live on honest earning," he said on another occasion. "Of all means of earning, trade is the best. Agriculture comes to it next. In service soldiery is the most preferable. It behoves a soldier to go to war anywhere his master sends him. He should become a gallant warrior, and should avoid the temptation of plunder. He should never think of gaining another's property unlawfully. Honest earning and obedience to one's master should be strictly observed."²

Not all the Sikhs entered the Khalsa: to this day there are the Singhs who belong to the main section consolidated by the tenth Guru, and those who profess only the much more peaceful tenets of Nanak—Nanakpanthis, they are called, the "easy-going" Sikhs. The latter have always shown a tendency to fall away into Hinduism, but as long as there has been any fighting to be done the Singhs have constituted the vast majority of the Sikh society. And here it should be emphasized that there is no Sikh race. As Mrs. Dorothy Dudley Short (*née* Field) says, in the process of passing from the quietistic attitude of the founder to the religion of the sword, Sikhism "actually evolved a nation, distinct in beliefs,

¹ Hence the very common use of Singh in Sikh names.

² Quoted by Sardar Kahan Singh in *Religions of the Empire* (Duckworth, 1925), p. 239.

political adherence, and physique, from out of the ordinary welter of Hinduism; an evolution which, having been brought about solely by the influence of religion, not founded on any fundamental difference of race, is unique in religious history."¹

Gobind Singh was assassinated in 1708 by a Mohammedan. He was the last of the Gurus, since he had decreed that after his death the Granth Sahib, the holy book, should take the place of the personal leader. So highly was his own teaching regarded that his writings and utterances were collected into a supplementary Granth, and the two Granths together constitute the Sikh Bible.

The later history of the Sikhs as a political power, their conquests, their wars with the British that ended a hundred years ago in their defeat, their valiant support of the British Raj that may well have had a decisive influence during the Indian Mutiny of 1857, their magnificent services in the "Sikh" regiments (recruits for which are baptized, or "take the *pahul*," by the Sikh regimental chaplain with full ceremonial — an astute piece of Indian Army practice that has done much to perpetuate Sikhism with its militarily-valuable qualities), their activities in the cause of Indian nationalism — these provide material for many a stirring page in India's annals.

For hundreds of years now the turbaned, bearded figure of the Sikh has stood out, head and shoulders above the ordinary run of Indian humanity.

¹ See "Introduction to Sikhism," in *The Eleven Religions*.

CHAPTER IX

PARSEEISM

OF all the ancient religions that have endured through the ages and survive to this day as living faiths, there is none with so small a roll of members as Parseeism (Zoroastrianism), the religion that traditionally was founded by Zoroaster, the Persian sage, more than two thousand five hundred years ago.

According to the 1941 census there were 114,890 Parsees in India, of whom some 86,000 were to be found in Bombay Province. There are another 10,000 in Persia. Yet the Parsees have an importance and exercise an influence altogether out of proportion to their numbers. This is because of their high level of education—one in four are able to speak, read, and write in English as well as in their vernacular—their intelligence and humanity, their active interest in public affairs and social reform, their wealth, and the generosity and good sense with which they administer their riches. Perhaps a comparison may be drawn with the Quakers in England, who are similarly few and influential. But the Quakers are not the inheritors of a faith older than history.

Zoroaster—or Zarathustra, to use the Persian form of the name—lived in the eastern regions of the Persian empire, in what is now Afghanistan or Soviet Asia. He is said to have flourished in the seventh century B.C., but some authorities place him much earlier, about 1000 B.C. or even earlier still, while some put him a little later, in the sixth century B.C. He was an historical figure, in the sense that he actually lived, but history knows next to nothing about him.

Why should it indeed? He passed his days on the very fringe of civilization, amongst largely unlettered pastoralists in a remote province of a decaying empire; he was of only middling stock and cut no great figure in the world. Tradition says he became a teacher at the age of thirty and died at seventy-seven. By what steps he, moving in an atmosphere of natural polytheism, evolved out of his inner consciousness the theological system that bears his name, we know very little. It is asserted that the theory of Dualism was his original contribution to the religious inheritance of the race.

That may be so; at least if this doctrine had antecedents, then the memory of them has slipped away into the irrecoverable past. All that we may learn of the prophet is contained in the Gathas, seventeen psalms that are attributed to his authorship and form the oldest portion of the Avesta, the sacred book of the Zoroastrians. (Sometimes it is called Zend-avesta, Zend being that part of it that is commentary on the main text.)

Zoroaster taught that there are in the world two contending principles, Good and Evil, which find expression in the two highest Beings, Ahura Mazda (Ormuzd), the Wise Lord—the good spirit or God—and Angra Mainyu or Ahriman, the Evil Spirit—Satan or the Devil, as we might say. Everything that is good and true and beautiful, constructive, healthy and happy and pleasant, is the work of Ormuzd. Everything that is bad and false and ugly, destructive, diseased and miserable and disgusting, is put down to Ahriman's account. In theory the two gods or principles are as nearly equal as can be. They are engaged in endless warfare. One day the issue will be decided, one day the last battle between them will be fought out, here on this earth which is their battlefield; and the pious Zoroastrian hopes, and confidently believes, that Ormuzd will ultimately prove the victor.

This is Zoroaster's attempt to solve a set of problems that has perplexed the minds of thinking men since man first found himself capable of thinking—the why of the existence of evil in a world that, according to the religious, is the creation of a God who is all-powerful, all-good, all-wise. Why do the wicked prosper while the good man goes to the wall? How can God be good if He allows disease and crime and undeserved poverty and war to continue to exist through the ages? If He is omnipotent why does He not prevent these and other evils? Job asked very much the same questions, and was forced to content himself with the conclusion that God's ways are beyond man's finding out. Christianity—orthodox Christianity, or what passed for such until quite recently—asserts that pain and sin and death entered into the world when Eve, the first woman, fell a victim to Satan's wiles and picked a fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, ate it herself and gave it to her husband Adam to eat. That "explanation," it will be noted, is essentially dualistic. A reading of "Paradise Lost" will make it clear that Milton believed just as strongly in an actual personal Devil as in an actual personal Good God. The Persian sage and the English poet were at one in failing to account

for the existence of the Devil if the Good God be both benevolent and all-powerful; but whereas Milton, his intellectual flights hampered by the existence of an infallible revelation, strove desperately to maintain the dogma of the Almighty's unfailing goodness, Zoroaster was much more forthright. He saved God's reputation for loving benevolence by throwing overboard his omnipotence.

The ethical bearing of the Zoroastrian solution will be readily apparent. It is postulated that men have free will: they are at liberty to choose between good and evil, truth and falsehood, right and wrong. If they choose the good, the true, the right . . . then not only are they assured of a place in heaven for themselves but, even more important, they strengthen Ormuzd's hands in his unrelenting and sometimes desperate struggle with Ahriman. If they choose the bad, the false, the wrong, then it is Ahriman who gains the advantage, while they will be doomed to the terrors of hell. Only if the majority of mankind follow the path of righteousness will Ormuzd prove victorious. If men in sufficient number prefer the bad, then Ahriman's will be the triumph. Human responsibility is asserted in the plainest possible fashion. Man is made a fellow soldier with the Good God in the battle of the ages. Every individual has a part to play, and it may be the part of a man of valour and virtue, or the part of a craven knave.

Dorothy Casaubon, the devout young Church-of-England heroine of George Eliot's "Middlemarch," was expressing the pure doctrine of Zoroastrianism when she said that "by desiring what is perfectly good, even when we don't quite know what it is and cannot do what we would, we are part of the divine power against evil—widening the skirts of light and making the struggle with darkness narrower."

Zoroastrian ethics are summed up in the triad of Good Thought, Good Word, Good Deed.

In one of the Zoroastrian scriptures there is a Table of Duties, thirty-three in number. Here are some characteristic ones: benevolence, thankfulness, truthfulness, contentedness, to further the welfare of the good and to be a friend to all men, to marry one's sister (this was regarded in the time of the Achæmenian rulers of Persia as a mark of the highest aristocracy, as it was in ancient Egypt), to adopt children, to labour industriously, to respect the capacities and goodwill of everyone, to keep maliciousness and untruthfulness far from one's mind, not to show rancour, not to be libidinous, not to be quarrelsome, not to touch the goods of travellers

and the unprotected, not to give way to anger, to exercise self-control, to resist laziness, to be happy oneself and to further the happiness of others, to help the good and to protect against the evil, to be careful not to speak untruth, to be scrupulously careful in keeping one's word, to open one's house to the sick, the poor, and the traveller. Altogether a very comprehensive scheme of ethics!

There is no suggestion of asceticism in Zoroastrian, and hence Parsee, ethics. It is the duty of man to be in full health and vigour, so that he may serve the cause of Righteousness. He ought to marry and become the father of strong and numerous children. Every act that tends to diminish his powers of fecundity is abhorred. Chastity is a necessary duty. Unnatural sexual relations are sternly condemned. Celibacy, fasting, self-flagellation, and other forms of mortification of the flesh are prohibited.

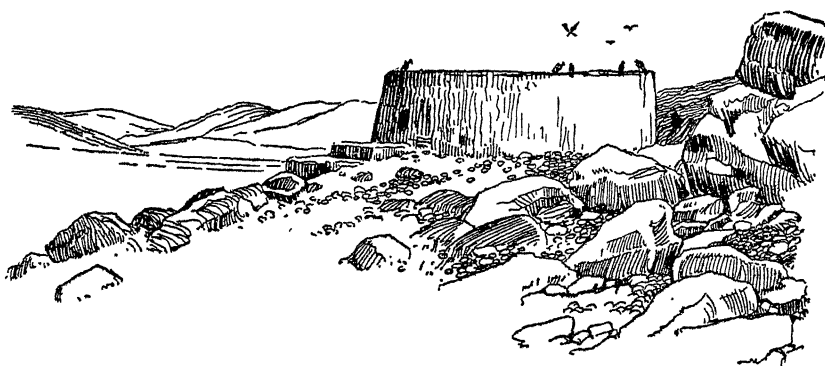
Zoroastrian worship consists in the recitation of passages from the sacred books, and in the performance of a somewhat complicated ritual in the fire-temple or church. Two priests are usually present at the services—there is a professional priesthood—and offerings to Ormuzd are made of the juice of the haoma (hôm) plant, consecrated bread, clarified butter, holy water, and dry fragrant wood. The daily obligations of the orthodox Parsee include the untying and retying of the sacred girdle (kusti) over the sacred shirt; this is performed after the washing of the face, hands, and feet in pure water. Grace before and after meals is usually said. A state of purity, physical as well as spiritual, is of the very first importance; and there are four purifications adopted by laymen and women and priesthood alike, viz. washing with water the hands and arms up to the elbows; the feet up to the ankles, and the face; washing with cow's urine; and a cleansing which is so long and complicated as to require nine days. Bull's urine is supposed to be of supreme purificatory value. Always and everywhere the Parsee is engaged in a fight against things that are supposed to defile.

Parsee comes from Parsi, "an inhabitant of Pars, the old Persian province of Pârša, or Persia Proper." This is identified with the modern province of Pars. As we have already noted, the Parsees are but a tiny handful set in the great Hindu mass. They are the descendants of Zoroastrian fugitives who, when their religion and country fell into the hands of the Moslem invaders, fled from Persia to the western coast of India and there found a haven of refuge. That was in the eighth century A.D.

For many centuries the Parsees lived lives of quiet retirement.

They showed no proselytizing zeal—as their present-day representatives show little or none. They asked only to be left alone to practise their peculiar rites in peace. For the most part and most of the time their wish was gratified. They were ignored; and as a result the vitality, the fighting spirit, of their religion was sapped and almost died.

But in the eighteenth century the world of Western scholarship became acquainted with the ancient Zoroastrian scriptures, and in the nineteenth Christian missionaries made a determined effort to sweep the younger generation of Parsees into their fold. Thus stimulated by outside interest and hostile activity, the Parsees set about the revival and reinstatement of their faith. From being



A Tower of Silence

hardly distinguishable from the Hindu mass, the little Parsee community deliberately emphasized those things that marked them off as a race and a religion altogether apart.

Very often the Parsees have been described as Fire Worshippers, but they themselves indignantly deny what they regard as an absurd and unwarrantable aspersion. It is true that the sacred fire plays a very important part in their religious ritual, but fire is no more than a symbol of the solitary Good God whom they adore. As of an evening members of the Parsee community gather on the shore at Bombay to perform their devotions by the light of the setting sun, they make a picture that the traveller will never forget.

The other elements, earth, air, and water, are similarly held in high honour, and there are said to be guardian angels presiding over them. The good Parsee takes the very greatest care not to



HINDU WOMEN AT WORSHIP

Colourful indeed is the spectacle at Divali, the 'feast of lamps,' when the gods are thanked for fertilized fields and crops ripened unto harvest.

defile any of these elements; and it is for this reason that the Parsee dead are never committed to the earth—that would pollute the ground; nor are they burnt—that would insult the sacred fire. But the corpses are laid on iron gratings in the Towers of Silence that are a feature of the Bombay landscape, and there left to be devoured by the vultures.* When only the picked-clean bones remain in the pit beneath, these are removed to a charnel-house.

From this it will be clear enough that the Parsees have no fear of ghosts. The dead, they believe, are beyond caring what happens to their mortal tenements. They are in heaven, where they dwell for evermore in a state of blessedness of word, thought, and deed; or, in passing over the Judge's bridge, they slipped and fell into hell. And what a hell! A place of horrible torments, to be rivalled only by the similar establishment of Christianity. The Parsee scriptures give vivid descriptions of the place and of its inmates, and it has been said that the fear of hell is among the most powerful deterrents from evil-doing.

In all the good works for which the Parsee community is so justly famed the women are as honourably distinguished as their husbands and fathers.

Women have always been held in high honour in Parsee society, as they seem to have been indeed in the ancient Persian civilization from which Parseeism was originally derived. But the position of full equality that they now enjoy is a growth of the last hundred years or so.

All in all, the Parsee element in Indian society—so slight when recorded by the statisticians—is a very considerable leaven, making for individual virtue and social progress, political enfranchisement and religious enlightenment.

CHAPTER X

JUDAISM

ABOUT 2000 B.C. a well-to-do householder left his home in Ur of the Chaldees and moved first to northern Mesopotamia and then across the desert to the west. This citizen-turned-sheikh did not know his ultimate destination; it was sufficient for him to know that the Lord (Jehovah) had called him and was guiding the direction of his caravan.

Abraham—Father of the Faithful of three world faiths—ended his earthly journey at long last, and was laid to rest in the cave he had bought at Machpelah, near Hebron—a mosque stands above it to this day; but the race to which he belonged and whose pioneering venture he captained has not finished its journeyings yet.

Centuries after Abraham's death the divine promise that had been made to the Patriarch—so it was believed with the utmost confidence—was fulfilled. Following forty years of wandering in the wilderness of Sinai, the Hebrews, as Abraham's descendants were now styled, or Israelites (after the name of his grandson), crossed the Jordan into Palestine, the land that their God Jehovah had promised should be their inheritance and possession. After a prolonged and bloody struggle, the barbaric Hebrews drove out or exterminated the much more civilized Canaanites, and at length established a theocratic principality, ruled by a judge as Jehovah's spokesman, and then a kingdom reigned over by the Lord's anointed.

The "land of promise" became the Hebrews' about 1275 B.C. The first king was Saul, about 1025 B.C. David, the most famous of the Hebrew monarchs, has been dated somewhat doubtfully to 1010 B.C. His son, Solomon, whose reputation for wisdom is belied by his political failure and financial extortion, was the last monarch of the kingdom as a whole. On his demise, two states took the place of one—Judah in the southern part of Palestine, and Israel in the northern—and often the two were rivals and at war. But their petty politics were overshadowed by the growing might of the Assyrians, and in 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar stormed Jerusalem; plundered and burnt the Temple, the centre of Jehovah's worship; and carried off the most illustrious and wealthy of the inhabitants as prisoners to

Babylon. The northern kingdom of Israel had been similarly conquered and treated by the Assyrians more than a hundred years earlier.

The Israelites never returned from their captivity in Assyria. What became of them has always been a matter of speculation to some curious minds, and at the present time a not inconsiderable Christian sect believes and eagerly propagates the theory that the British are the modern representatives of the lost Ten Tribes. Some at least of the deported citizens of the kingdom of Judah survived the Babylonian Captivity and (now and henceforth known as Jews) were permitted to return to Jerusalem under Cyrus (about 538 B.C.). The Temple was rebuilt, the holy scriptures were compiled and shaped. The principality was re-established, although only for a brief period under the Maccabees had it even a pretension to independence; for the rest, it was a feudatory of Alexander's Greece, the Egypt of the Ptolemies, the Syria of the Seleucids, the Rome of Pompey and the first Cæsars. When Jesus, the reputed founder of Christianity, was born in Bethlehem (if the tradition may be relied on) a Jewish king reigned in Jerusalem as one of the many vassals of Augustus Cæsar, monarch of the whole Western World. When some thirty years later he was crucified on Calvary, it was on the orders of a Roman procurator. Another generation, and the Jews rose in revolt against the Roman overlord, only to be crushed pitilessly by Titus (A.D. 70). The Temple was destroyed, and with it the city; but quite a number of Jews were permitted by the tolerant Romans to continue to live in Palestine. Following a succession of attempts to throw off the Roman yoke, however, Judæa was desolated and the Jewish race dispersed throughout the countries of the Empire.

That was in A.D. 135, eighteen hundred years ago; at the other end of the known world the Romans were doing their best to civilize the Ancient Britons. But the Jews have long memories; and never in all the centuries of their exile, of their world-wide wanderings, have they forgotten that Jehovah promised their father Abraham the land of Canaan, that David established his throne in Jerusalem, that for hundreds of years kings of his royal line reigned in Palestine.

Since the seventh century the Arabs have held Palestine and are, in spite of many years of strongly stimulated Jewish immigration, still the predominant race. But the Jews remember that promise. The land that their ancestors conquered, occupied for some six or seven

hundred years and then lost, must be restored to the Jews of to-day, to become their National Home.

This racial nostalgia, this constant hankering after long-vanished glories, this frequently expressed resolve to rebuild the holy city of Zion on the dusty hills of Palestine, must be of the deepest interest to the historian of ideas, besides constituting a factor of very great importance in current politics. Yet it may be maintained that the Jews' most permanent and valuable contribution to human culture has not been in the field of politics but in the realm of morals. What Jewish thinkers and seers have thought and said about man's relationships with God and his fellow-men have influenced, and still influence, the lives of millions, the great majority of whom are not of the Jewish race or professors of the Jewish faith. This influence is exerted by reason of the fact that a very large body of Jewish sacred writings has become the Old Testament of the Christian Bible, and from these much of Christian as well as most of Jewish ethics are derived.

The Pentateuch. Judaism has been defined as belief in absolute monotheism and the practical effect of that belief on life. It is not a collection of intellectual conceptions, of theological dogmas, but a course of life exercised under the discipline of the sacred code, the Law, that (it is held) proceeded originally from God Himself.

This moral code is based on, and to a large extent contained in, the five books (Pentateuch) that open the Old Testament and are generally attributed to Moses—although most modern scholars reject the theory that Moses was or could have been the author.

The Old Testament, the Pentateuch in particular, shows many signs—differences in style, differences in language, differences in the social and religious background, numerous repetitions and contradictions impossible to reconcile—of being a composite creation, the work of many men in different ages and stages of culture and religious belief. There are layers or strata of narrative, different elements derived from varying sources, which have been welded together by editors or redactors long after the stories and discourses were first put into circulation, of course by word of mouth. This method of composition is very marked in that section known as the Law, which is found to comprise a number of codes of different periods, together with a collection of miscellaneous legends and traditions drawn from many different quarters, the whole having been subjected to editorial revision on more than one occasion, so that it did not assume its present form until after the Jews had returned from the "Babylonian Captivity."

The Ten Commandments. Genesis is almost entirely a book of history and legend, real-life stories and romantic tales. From first to last it is one of the most readable of the books making up the Bible; and the stories of Adam and Eve, Noah and his Ark, Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, are among the literary treasures of the human race. Exodus, too, is largely history, or what purports to be history, for the critics have not yet settled the many difficulties arising from the accounts of Israel in Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the forty years of wandering in the wilderness of Sinai. But what is very much to our present purpose is that Exodus contains a great mass of legal matter, including the most famous set of moral do's and don'ts that have come down to us from our fathers—the Ten Commandments, as they are familiarly known, or the Decalogue (Greek, ten words), to use the term employed in the Septuagint, the translation of the Old Testament made at Alexandria by a band of seventy Jewish scholars in the third century B.C.

As we have it (Exodus xx, 1-17) the Decalogue consists of two positive commands, to keep the Sabbath and to have respect for parents, and eight "thou shalt nots"—have any other gods but the Lord, make and bow down to and worship any graven image, take the name of the Lord in vain, kill, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, covet anything that is thy neighbour's. (There is another version of the Ten Commandments, showing some interesting variations, in Deuteronomy v, 6-21.)

According to the Biblical narrative these commandments were uttered by Jehovah on Mt. Horeb in Sinai, and written by him on two tables of stone which Moses took back with him to the Israelites encamped in the plain below. Moses dropped the tablets in his indignation at seeing the Israelites, led by his brother Aaron, worshipping the Golden Calf; whereupon he was bidden by God to hew other tablets, on which God wrote again the Ten Commandments or "words." These were placed in the Ark as evidence of the Covenant that had been arrived at between Jehovah and his chosen people.

According to the chronology of Archbishop Usher (1581-1656) still adopted in Bibles published by the royal printers, this was in the year 1491 B.C., but there is no such chronological positiveness among the scholars. The fact that the Decalogue is not ritual but almost entirely moral; the prohibition of images apparently unknown in the days of those censorious prophets, Elijah and Elisha, who would surely have condemned them if they had been in use; and

the condemnation of covetousness, which suggests a settled life in surroundings where there was much to covet—all these lend support to the view that the code is grounded on the teaching of the great Hebrew prophets, and that it cannot be earlier than the middle of the eighth century B.C.

The Book of the Covenant. In Exodus there is another code, much more detailed and far less concise, which is held by some Bible scholars to be the oldest legislation of all; it runs from chapter xx, 22, to the end of chapter xxiii, and is known as the Book of the Covenant. In form and many of its precepts it closely resembles the Code of Hammurabi (see Chap. 3), but it is more humane in some respects than the older code, and this suggests a later date; indeed, it is usually considered that in its present form it belongs to the period of the early canonical prophets, i.e. the middle of the eighth century B.C. But there is little doubt that the book is in no sense new law, but a setting down of legal practices that had been long current and generally observed.

This Book of the Covenant begins with the prohibition of images, gods of gold or gods of silver, and altars of hewn stone. Then we have a long series of civil and criminal statutes, religious and moral laws, together with a kind of festal calendar, all obviously suited to a settled agricultural community and with hardly a suggestion of ritual observances.

So far as crimes in general are concerned, the law is "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." A homicide shall be surely put to death; so, too, a man who strikes (or even curses) his father or his mother, and also a slaver, one "that stealeth a man and selleth him." Restitution must be made by a thief, and by the man who has committed arson, burning a man's corn in the field or in stack. Damage done by straying cattle must be paid for. An ox that fatally gores a man or woman shall be stoned to death; and the owner, too, shall be executed if it be proved that the ox had been known in time past to be a dangerous gorer. If the victim of the ox's "pushing" be a slave, then the ox shall be stoned and his owner shall give to the slain man's owner thirty shekels of silver. Those guilty of making false reports, wresting judgment, denying justice to a poor litigant, taking gifts for the perversion of justice, demanding usury, oppressing a stranger—"seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt"—are sternly condemned. "Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child" is a commandment as

praiseworthy as "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" is just the reverse.

Brawlers who hurt a woman with child, "so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow," shall be punished at the discretion of the woman's husband. But if any mischief follow—presumably if the woman dies as a result of the miscarriage—then "thou shalt give life for life."

A number of regulations have to do with slaves, or "servants" as they are described euphemistically in the Authorized Version. If the slave be a Hebrew, then after six years' service he is to receive his freedom, and his wife likewise if he brought her with him into servitude; but if she has been given him by their master, then the woman and any children she shall have borne her husband shall remain in the master's possession.

An Israelite who makes sacrifices unto any other god but the Lord "shall be utterly destroyed" since, as the commandment has it, "the Lord thy God is a jealous God." And there is a grim little injunction that amongst the fruits that are the Lord's by right are the fruit of one's loins: "the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me." For Jehovah, too, might demand human sacrifice, and instances of such sacrifice are to be found in these early books. Abraham offered up Isaac, we are told, although his hand was stayed as he poised the sacrificial knife. Jephthah dedicated his daughter, doing "with her according to the vow which he had vowed;" and Agag, king of the Amalekites, who came to Samuel "walking delicately" and saying unto himself, "Surely the bitterness of death is past," was hewn in pieces before the Lord. Not yet had men come to conceive of a god who takes no delight in burnt offerings, whose sacrifices are a broken spirit, who will not despise a broken and a contrite heart. That time was far distant: in the age and the stage of culture reflected in these ancient laws Jehovah is only one god among many—the god of Israel just as much as, but hardly more than, Chemosh is the god of Moab and the Baals are the gods of the people of Canaan.

Ethics of Leviticus. The third book of the Pentateuch is essentially a law book, a manual of instruction for the priests or Levites, and in the main it is concerned with ritual. Chapters xvii to xxv constitute what has been called a "Code of Holiness," and embedded in this code is a brief manual (xix–xx) of moral instruction that is perhaps the best representative of the ethics of the ancient Hebrews. The opening group of commandments is in some measure a repetition

of the Decalogue, and throughout sundry parallels are obvious, but these are not sufficient to destroy the little code's originality; rather they support the view that this is another of the epitomes of good morals of which there were doubtless many in Israel.

Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths. Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods.

When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger.

Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another. And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God.

Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him; the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.

Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind.

Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty. Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people. Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, *but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind: thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed: neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon thee.

Whosoever lieth carnally with a woman, that is a bondmaid, betrothed to an husband, and not at all redeemed, nor freedom given her; she shall be scourged; they shall not be put to death, because she was not free. And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord . . . even a ram.

Ye shall not eat anything with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times.

Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard. Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you.

Do not prostitute thy daughter, to cause her to be a whore; lest the land fall to whoredom, and the land become full of wickedness.

Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary. Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them.

Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man. And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself.

Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, shall ye have. . . .

So run the precepts, slightly shortened, contained in this little guide to the good life as it was intended to be lived in ancient Palestine.

The Deuteronomic Laws. There is little to detain us in Numbers, since it is mainly the history of the wanderings in the wilderness. Deuteronomy, however, the fifth and last of the books of the Pentateuch, is almost entirely devoted to the moral code.

In the second book of Kings (xxii, 8) we are told that Hilkiyah the high priest discovered "the book of the law in the house of the Lord," and that this was taken to the young king, the devout Josiah, who ordered it to be publicly read, and made it the basis of a new covenant with the Lord. This was in 621 B.C., and there can be little doubt that Deuteronomy is the book in question.

Deuteronomy is, then, the completed compendium of the "laws of Moses." It is *the* Book of the Law, containing the finished and finally approved version of the Mosaic teaching about man's duty to his God and to his neighbour. Most of it had been recorded already in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, but the formulation and phraseology in Deuteronomy are often different; and the emphasis on Jerusalem as the capital and only sanctuary of the Hebrew kingdom and religion, and on the laws of contract, are among the many indications that the book is intended for use in the Palestine of the later kings.

Although the book is referred to as a code, there are few traces of an orderly arrangement, and precept follows precept in almost bewildering variety and sometimes in very strange juxtaposition. Thus the commandment that "the woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man"—a text which has been resurrected or quoted in our own days by those who dislike women in trousers—"neither shall a man put on a woman's garment," is immediately followed by a prohibition concerning bird-nesting, and an injunction that every new house that is built shall be provided with a battlement so as to prevent people from falling off the flat roof.

Some clauses dealing with the agricultural life may be picked out. In sowing a vineyard there must be no mixture of seeds. An ox and an ass may not be put in the plough together. "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn." If you come unto your neighbour's vineyard then you may eat your fill of the grapes, but you must not take any away in your basket. Similarly, in his cornfield you may pluck ears of corn and eat them, but you must not employ a sickle. At harvest time, if you forget

a sheaf in the field, you must not go back for it; and when you shake your olive tree, you should not do it too thoroughly, nor should you take care to strip every grape from your vines: something should be left for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. "Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark" is an oft-quoted prohibition; and another well-known enactment is that every seventh year shall be a "year of release" for the poor debtor and for the slave who is an Hebrew. How far this jubilee was a generally accepted practice is a matter of dispute.

Although it has been claimed that the distinctive note of the Deuteronomic legislation is a broad humanity, it must be admitted that it bears many an indication of a very different temper. The laws against heathenism and its devotees are of the most sanguinary character. The death penalty is pronounced on those Hebrews who are traitors to Jehovah and serve other gods. Murderers, those who steal Hebrews and sell them into slavery, and undutiful sons, are likewise liable to execution by stoning or by hanging. For what was considered to be minor offences the approved punishment was the bastinado.

The institution of "cities of refuge" to which the man who has accidentally killed another may flee from the "avenger of blood," and the general rule that at least two witnesses are required to substantiate a criminal charge, may have done something to moderate in practice the rigour of the theory.

In very large measure the code is concerned with sexual conduct. A regulation that will appeal to many is that a man who has taken a new wife "shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business; but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken."

If a man takes a wife and comes to the conclusion that she was not a virgin bride, then he must be very careful in his accusation. If it be proved to the satisfaction of the elders of the city that she was indeed a maid, then he may be chastised and fined a hundred shekels of silver for having given "occasions of speech against her." If, however, his allegation is found to be well grounded, then the unhappy damsel shall be stoned to death at her father's door, "because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house."

Marriage to a deceased wife's sister is a recent innovation in our modern society, yet it was unequivocally commanded among the Hebrews more than 2,500 years ago. If two brothers have

been living together, reads the precept, and one of them dies and leaves no issue, then "the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife . . . And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel." If the man refuses—he may have already a wife or wives—then may the woman "come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. . . ."

Divorce is easy for the man. When a man has taken a wife and she finds no favour in his eyes, all he has to do is to write her a "bill of divorcement," put it in her hand, and send her out of the house. She may then go back to her father, or become another man's wife. An adulteress is to be slain, but strict fidelity on the part of the husband is neither expected nor enforced. Rape may be punishable with death. If a man commits an assault in the city on "a damsel that is a virgin, betrothed unto an husband," he shall be stoned, and also the girl, "because she cried not, being in the city"; but if a man find and force the betrothed damsel in the field, where "there was none to save her," then only he shall die. If the damsel is not betrothed, then she shall become the man's wife, and he shall pay her father fifty shekels of silver by way of bride-price. And the man "may not put her away all his days."

Finally, we may note the body of regulations, ranging from the construction of latrines outside the camp to the strange and complicated division of the animal world into beasts and birds and fishes that are "clean" and may be eaten, and "unclean," which must be completely eschewed.

At a distance of so many, many centuries, much that is found in the pages of Deuteronomy appears perplexing or even abhorrent. But taken all in all, the book well deserves what has been said of it, that it will stand as one of the most noteworthy attempts in history to regulate the whole life of a people by its highest religious principles.

Ethics in the Prophets. For a hundred and fifty years before the finding of the Book of the Law under Josiah and for as long a period after it, the leaders of theological opinion and the dictators of morality were the Prophets, that strange succession of god-

intoxicated men who believed themselves, and were generally believed by others, to be the mouthpieces of Jehovah. The earliest of these Hebrew puritans of whose discourses and predictions we have written records is Amos, the herdsman of Tekoa, who lived during the reign of Uzziah, king of Judah (c. 786 B.C.), and the latest is supposed to have been Malachi, whose book may be assigned with some confidence to the first half of the fourth century B.C.

If we may believe these ancient prophets, the state of Israel was bad altogether and all the time. How far their vaticinations reflect the actual conditions of the society in which they lived, it is impossible to say; but a fanaticism born of lonely communings in the desert, and of constitutional antipathies to the joys and comforts of a homely and settled existence, is naturally inclined to employ the darkest colours in its delineation of the human character.

Here, to begin with, is Amos, the progenitor of the prophetic line. He cries woe to them "that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments, but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph."

Next we turn an ear to Hosea, a contemporary of Amos. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel," he thunders, "for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, no mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land." On every hand, he says, there is swearing and lying, and killing and stealing, and committing adultery, so that the land shall mourn and even the beasts of the field, the fowls of heaven, and the fishes of the sea shall be taken away. And because the people have sacrificed to the gods of the native Canaanites "upon the tops of mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good, therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery."

Now we listen to Isaiah, the first of the greater Hebrew prophets. His book—whether one Isaiah wrote it, or two Isaiahs, or three or more, is a matter of importance to the Biblical critics, but hardly to us—is a masterpiece of sacred literature; and in his denunciations, as in his promises of Divine forgiveness and mercy, the author's

command of language, his gift for literary expression, is made manifest. Here is an early passage (ch. iii):

Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet; therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will discover their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires [tiaras] like the moon, the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers [spangled ornaments], the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, the rings and nose jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, the glasses and the fine linen, and the hoods and the veils. And it shall come to pass that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair, baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty. . . .

A few pages later and it is "Woe!" unto the enclosers, to "them that join house to house, that lay field to field," till there be no place left for the landless and the poor: (as likely as not Bishop Latimer and Sir Thomas More had this passage in mind when they denounced the rich enclosers of the Tudor period in England).

Such is the wickedness of Israel that desolation is coming suddenly, and great evil—this prophecy was fulfilled when Sennacherib's chariots, the panzers of the age, "blitzed" Hezekiah's kingdom—and the prophet of Jehovah scornfully invites "the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators" to stand up and save the threatened people from the things that were coming upon them.

So we come to that sublimely beautiful chapter, the 53rd Isaiah. Christian commentators have striven hard to read into the text a prophecy of Christ's coming: he who was "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" was Jesus, the carpenter's son, who lived in Palestine seven hundred years later. But is not this interpretation a fanciful one? Surely it is more reasonable to suppose that Isaiah had in mind a martyr of his own day, a man of the finest character, a high-minded patriot, or a devoted preacher of Divine truths? We may imagine a man of one of the countries occupied by Nazi Germany during the World War thinking along these lines without being able to express his thoughts in such lofty language—thinking, in the days of liberation, of some victim of the Gestapo who faced the

firing-squad or stood on the scaffold and went to his death in another man's place, when his motives were misinterpreted, his patriotism doubted, his courage and self-sacrifice denied. "Surely he hath borne *our* griefs, and carried *our* sorrows . . . with *his* stripes *we* are healed. . . ."

Next we have Jeremiah, whose sayings are generally of a character that is well described as "Jeremiads." Most of his prophecies are condemnations of the people for having neglected the worship of the one true God. He tells them that their iniquities have turned away good things from them. For among them are wicked men.

They lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge (ch. v).

Ezekiel has a description (ch. xviii) of the good man that we may quote.

If a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, and hath not eaten upon the mountains [i.e. has not worshipped at one of the pagan shrines], neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstuous woman, and hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; he that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man, hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly—he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God.

But perhaps the most interesting passage in this prophet is the one (ch. viii) in which he refers to a vision in which the Lord took him into the Temple in Jerusalem, "and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz . . . and behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east."

Ezekiel was a youthful priest in Jerusalem when the city was besieged and taken by Nebuchadnezzar, and as a captive he was one of those who "sat down by the rivers of Babylon, and wept." But there were many among the deportees who reacted very differently. Indeed, from the frequent references to idolatry and

going astray after strange gods in the pages of the Old Testament it would almost seem as if the worship of Jehovah were throughout the exception rather than the rule. The Hebrews, like the Canaanites and the Syrians by whom they were surrounded, or among whom they lived, had the Oriental longing for colour and symbolism and sex, all of which were denied them in the religion that was their national and racial inheritance. So it was that at the first opportunity they went a-whoring after foreign gods, to the amazement and disgust of the Prophets, who could not understand the frailties of their fellows, their intellectual demands and emotional cravings. So it was that in his vision Ezekiel saw the Zoroastrians on their knees before the sun; and the women beating their bare bosoms, tearing their hair, and sobbing pitifully, for the god who had died and descended into the underworld so that there was no more love, no more giving and taking in marriage, no more conceiving and bringing forth.

Finally we come to Micah, who is supposed to have been a contemporary of Isaiah in the eighth century B.C. Uttering his prophecies at a time when invasion by the Assyrian hordes was imminent, he found it all too easy to account for this grim turn in Israel's fortunes. The good man is perished out of the earth, he says, and there is none upright among men. They do evil with both hands: the best of them is as a briar and the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge. Don't put any trust in a friend, nor any confidence in a guide; "keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom." Sons dishonour their fathers, daughters rise up against their mothers, the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law. A man's enemies are the men of his own house.

In spite of all, however, the prophet is not discouraged. The Assyrians may, indeed will, triumph. But only for a time, so long as the Lord wills. A day will come when God shall judge the nations from his holy seat in Zion. "And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree: and none shall make them afraid. . . ."

Micah's supreme contribution to the human Bible is his definition of what is required of the good man. The Lord will not be pleased with sacrifices, with thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of oil—this was uttered, be it remembered, when

the priests were maintaining to the full the bloody sacrifices in the Temple courts at Jerusalem—not even if the sacrifice be a human one, the fruit of one's body offered for the sin of one's soul. "What doth the Lord require of thee," asks the prophet, "but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" This surely is the high-water mark of Hebrew religious thinking, the identification of God's will with a code of behaviour that is both simple and sublime.

Wisdom Literature. To the student of morals perhaps the most interesting of the Bible books are those which are included under the heading of the Wisdom Literature, viz. Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the great problem-drama of Job.

All the Wisdom books are later than the Exile: the ascription of some of the sayings to Solomon (c. 970 B.C.) is held to be an example of a recognized literary habit of the times. They are the work of a distinct class of men of thought and letters whom we may style Sages. The point of view of these men was markedly different from that of the Prophets, or the priests, or even that of the Scribes, the men whose particular interest was the study of the Scriptures. They were not really concerned with theology: they took the great postulates of Hebrew religion for granted. They had little interest in forms and ceremonies: those they left to the priestly class. They were not particularly learned in the Scriptures, and made no pretension to deep scholarship. Essentially they were men of the world, men of sagacity and wide practical experience, patriotic, able, and conscientious; but in the political sphere professing a creed of compromising realism that led to their denunciation by Isaiah and Jeremiah and the rest as "false prophets." They made it their chief business in life to pursue Wisdom; and although they would have unhesitatingly agreed with Job that "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding," they made the pursuit of wisdom, and not the single-minded and whole-hearted service of Jehovah, the main aim of life. If any had ventured to criticize them on that ground, they might have replied that to pursue wisdom was indeed a way of serving God not less meritorious or worthy than offering up sacrifices in the Temple courts, or making profuse professions of religious loyalty.

If ever the Hebraic spirit got near to philosophy, it was in the Wisdom literature. Yet the philosophy of the Hebrew sages was very different from that of the schools of Athens and Alexandria.



A READER
IN THE
SYNAGOGUE



AT THE WAILING WALL IN JERUSALEM

Here against the stones that were part of Herod's Temple, if not of the original Temple of Solomon, devout Jews are wont to mourn the departed glories of Zion.

The wise men of ancient Jewry were concerned hardly at all with the ultimate problems, with the meaning of reality, with an analysis of knowing and of knowledge. Nor did they probe too deeply or inquisitively into the nature of virtue. They assumed that goodness is a sincere adhesion to the moral law, but the central fact of their writings is the equation of wisdom and morality. The good man is also a wise man, and because he is wise he can hardly help being good. Wickedness is folly, and a bad man is a fool. Whereas the Prophets urged men to lead lives of moral excellence because this was the will of God, and there could be no real happiness where the Divine precepts were made of no account, the Sages have nothing to say about "duty" or "conscience"; the motive for well-doing that they present is individual prosperity and happiness. *Individual*, be it noted: public good is never mentioned, private benefit is all in all, and the man who prospers is confidently believed to have found favour in God's sight. Just as certainly, the man on whom misfortunes come thick and fast has incurred God's anger and is being punished for his iniquities.

This was the point of the argument that for three days resounded about Job's ears as he sat in the dust and ashes of his ruined happiness. He had been wealthy, but now he was suddenly poor; he had had sons and daughters, flocks and herds, but now he was bereft and forlorn. Obviously, then—at least it was obvious enough to Eliphaz—Job had sinned, and sinned grievously, and no amount of indignant protestations of injured innocence could shake him out of his conviction.

Here it may be mentioned that the Wisdom literature was not confined by any means to the Jews. It was a world-wide product, to which the thinkers of all the principal Oriental peoples made their contributions. Thus the book of Proverbs, while consisting in the main of sayings that had long been current in Hebrew society, contains literally dozens that have been traced to non-Hebrew books. Indeed, one collection, the third and the oldest of the ten collections that scholars have detected, is lifted bodily from an Egyptian wisdom book; and a number of isolated proverbs are from a Babylonian work of similar character.

Proverbs has been described very properly as a little manual of sanctified commonsense, and it is not surprising to find many of its aphorisms contained in every book of quotations. There is no need to include even a short selection here; but we may find space for the not so well known and remembered, but very striking

passages in which there is a contrast in feminine portraiture. First, the Virtuous Woman.

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her . . . She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands . . . She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet [or double garments]. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple . . . She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant . . . She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. . . . (xxxix, 10-28).

Then the "strange woman," the abandoned hussy, the *femme fatale*:

At the window of my house I looked through my casement, and beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding, passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night.

And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart . . . So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, "I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves. For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey. He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed.

With her much fair speech she caused him to yield; with the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life (vii, 7-23).

To conclude our excursion into the Wisdom literature, here is Ecclesiastes, the book of the Preacher, who saw life and saw it whole, and behold, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." In this book, it has been said, the religious spirit of Israel is seen to be

completely exhausted. It can no more, as in Job and the Psalms, use the problems of life in order to rise to lofty intuitions of its relation to God. It sinks back defeated, able only to offer a few practical rules for ordinary life. "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart," is the counsel of this ancient sage; "live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest." And again, "a man hath no better thing under the sun than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry." Live while you are yet alive.

For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope; for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished: neither have they any more a portion for ever in anything that is done under the sun . . . Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest. . . . (ix, 4-8).

Ethics in the Talmud. No study of Jewish ethics could be regarded as reasonably adequate without some reference to the Talmud, that mass of ancient writings which forms the fundamental code of Jewish civil and canonical law. This came into being following the suppression of the Jewish kingdom in Palestine in 586 B.C., and it was a thousand years in its formulation. It consists of the Mishna, or text, and the Gemara, or commentary; and it is the work of a long succession of rabbis of Palestine and Babylon, who strove to deduce a complete guide to life from the Torah (often translated "law," but more correctly "teaching, direction") or the Hebrew Scriptures—the Pentateuch, or books of Moses, some of the prophetic writings, and the Psalms—that the Jews took with them when they went as captives to Babylon. It may be described as the "case law" of the Jewish people, and it was as elastic in its formation as the judge-made law that is administered in the English courts. By the system of deductive interpretation employed by the rabbis, a Scriptural passage, writes Rev. Dr. A. Cohen,¹ yielded far more than could be discerned on the surface. The sacred words became an inexhaustible mine which, when quarried, produced rich treasures of religious and ethical teaching.

In the Talmud, as indeed in the Old Testament, from which it derived, sin is rebellion against God. The Torah is a revelation of His will, and to act contrary to any of its ordinances is transgression.

¹ *Everybody's Talmud* (Dent, 1932), p. 18.

The good man conforms to the Torah; the sinner is one who disregards it. In theory, then, all sins are equally heinous, since they are all acts of revolt against God; but in practice four cardinal sins are recognized, viz. idolatry, unchastity, bloodshed, and slander. Of these, by far the most serious, since it involves the repudiation of the whole basis of Jewish religion and ethics, is idolatry.

Unchastity is denounced in the strongest terms, and an adulterer is regarded as a practical atheist. A very strict standard of sexual morality is enjoined, and a man is advised to avoid doing or seeing anything which may excite his passions. For example, he should not engage in much gossip with women, not even with his own wife, and a man should never walk behind a woman on the road: it would be safer for him to walk behind a lion. And should he meet a woman on a bridge, he should let her pass by on the side, since whoever crosses a stream behind a woman will have no portion in the world to come. Closely associated with unchastity is immodesty of speech. Swearing and obscene language are severely condemned, and so is the listening thereto without protesting. "Why are the fingers tapered like pegs? So that if one hears anything improper he can insert them in his ears."

Murder and manslaughter are condemned on the ground that they entail the destruction of one made in the image of God. But if it is a case of killing or being killed, homicide may perhaps be justified.

Sometimes hatred is put on a level with idolatry, unchastity, and bloodshed, since it may so easily lead to murder.

But the strongest language is not too strong for the vice of slander, the fourth of the cardinal sins. Those guilty of this offence are said to "slay" three persons—the speaker himself, the one spoken to, and the one spoken of. To slander anyone is to deny the very existence of God; and we are told that "the retailer of slander, the receiver of it, and who gives false evidence against his fellow, deserve to be cast to the dog." Another aphorism that better deserves quotation is: "Just as a man esteems his own honour, so let him esteem the honour of his neighbour. Just as nobody wishes his own reputation slandered, so let him never desire to slander his neighbour's reputation."

Early marriage is strongly recommended, since otherwise there is a risk of a daughter becoming a harlot. Twelve and a half was held to be the right age for a girl to wed. But an old man should not take a young bride, or *vice versa*. "Go, marry one who is about

your own age and do not introduce strife into your house." Nor should eugenic considerations be overlooked. A tall man should not marry a tall woman, or their children will be lanky; and a short man should not marry a short woman, or their children will be dwarfish. Similarly, two fair people should not marry, nor two dark people, lest their children be excessively fair or swarthy. Another more understandable piece of advice is that a man should "descend a step" in choosing a wife.

Polygamy is sanctioned in the Talmud just as it is in the Old Testament, but rabbis at least were always monogamous. On the whole the matrimonial ideal is a high one, and domestic felicity is rated amongst God's choicest gifts. Divorce is made an easy matter for the man, and one maxim runs that a man may divorce his wife if she spoils his cooking! Sterility after ten years constitutes grounds for divorce, but insanity makes a marriage indissoluble. Impotence, refusal to cohabit, and inability or unwillingness to support her, give a wife the right to demand a divorce. What many people would regard as a particularly enlightened provision is that a woman joined to a man whom she finds repulsive may secure a divorce on withholding herself from him. But desertion is not in itself a sufficient ground for divorce. Since the primary aim in marriage is the production of children, deliberate childlessness is denounced as a serious sin; but three classes of woman—minors (girls not yet twelve years old), pregnant women, and nursing mothers—are permitted to avoid conception.

Sons are preferred to daughters, since they may become a support to their parents in old age; while a daughter is a constant anxiety lest she be seduced in her early years, in adolescence go astray, when of marriageable age fail to find a husband, when married prove to be barren, and when old practise witchcraft. But in the Talmud there are plentiful indications of that love for children, both boys and girls, which has always been one of the most attractive characteristics of the Jewish race.

Many of the paragraphs of the Talmud are concerned with the relationship of master and man, of owner and slave. There is a code of good behaviour which all must obey. Wages must be adequate and paid promptly: a fair day's work must be rendered in return for a fair day's pay. There must be no trickery, no slacking, no short measure of time or toil. Slaves are naturally much more at their masters' disposal than the free labourers; but even so, a Hebrew slave should not be required to wash his master's

feet or put on his sandals for him, carry vessels for him to the bath-house, help him upstairs, or carry him in a litter. Gentile slaves can be required to do all these menial offices, and indeed almost anything.

The good man in the Talmud is the good man of the Bible—very naturally, since the one is a gloss or commentary on the other. Humility is said to be the greatest of all the virtues: the truly meek man is favoured by God, but the arrogant is little better than an idolater. Pride of wealth and pride of learning are equally condemned. Charity, which is very largely a matter of alms-giving, blesses the giver as much as the receiver. Such kindly deeds as visiting the sick, helping wayfarers on their way, looking after the widowed and the fatherless, and giving marriage portions to poor girls, are strongly commended. Over-indulgence in food and drink is just as strongly censured, but there is no demand for total abstinence. Generally speaking, asceticism is not looked upon with any great measure of approval.

So we come to the Golden Rule as the Talmud states it. One day a heathen came to the great and good rabbi Hillel (c. 60 B.C.—A.D. 10: he was thus still alive when Jesus was born), and expressed his readiness to become a convert to Judaism if he were taught the whole of the Torah while standing on one foot. The Rabbi was in no wise put out, nor was he offended at what might well have seemed a childish challenge. "What is hateful to yourself," he replied, "don't do to your fellow man. That is the whole of the Torah, and the remainder is but commentary. Go, learn it".¹

Darker Side of Hebrew Ethics. When Matthew Arnold expressed the opinion that we derive our highest ideal of righteousness from Jewish sources, Samuel Butler disagreed most strongly, declaring that he could point to no good thing "as a notoriously Hebrew contribution to our moral and intellectual well-being, as I can point to our law and say that it is Roman, or to our fine arts and say that they are based on what the Greeks and Italians taught us. On the contrary, if asked what feature of post-Christian life we had derived most distinctly from Hebrew sources I should say at once 'intolerance'—the desire to dogmatize about matters whereon the Greek and Roman held certainty to be at once unimportant and unattainable. This, with all its train of bloodshed and family disunion, is chargeable to the Jewish rather than to any other account."

¹Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

The author of "Erewhon" was just as critical of the literature that other critics of all ages and many lands and cultures have loved to praise as the embodiment of Divine truth. The Song of Solomon and the Book of Esther, he wrote, are the most interesting in the Old Testament, but these are the very ones that make the smallest pretension to holiness, and neither is of transcendent merit. They would stand no chance of being accepted by Messrs. Cassell & Co. or by any Biblical publisher of the present day. Job contains some fine passages, and so do some of the Psalms, but Mudie (the great circulating library of Victorian days) would not take thirteen copies of the lot if they were to appear now for the first time, "unless indeed their royal authorship were to arouse an adventitious interest in them." As for the Prophets, in Butler's opinion they were a pretty poor lot; they certainly could not hold their own against such modern masterpieces as "The Pilgrim's Progress" and "Tom Jones."¹

Here we are not concerned with the literary quality of these ancient writings, but with the ethical; and it is hardly to be denied that Hebrew morality was not only deficient in itself in some respects, but where it was elevated and noble it would seem to have been only too seldom translated into conduct.

Only by the exercise of a charitable leniency that few county justices would be ready to extend to a poacher, or a London stipendiary to a pickpocket, is it possible to accept the description of David—the king who sent his valiant captain to his death in order that he might take to wife the woman he had already seduced and was with child by him—as a man after God's own heart. And David was not exceptional. There is hardly an Old Testament character who, judged by even our standards, is not woefully deficient. Abraham—the Friend of God—who allowed his wife to be taken into Pharaoh's harem, and said nothing for fear of his own safety; Jacob, who tricked his father into giving him the elder son's birthright; Joshua, the first of many Jewish conquerors who, at Jehovah's behest, slaughtered the Canaanites with a thoroughness that is expressed in an obscenity that tires and disgusts with repetition; Jael, who drove a nail into the temples of the sleeping Sisera, who had trusted to her generosity; Jephthah, who sacrificed his daughter to Jehovah in accordance with his foolish vow, and Samuel, who killed Agag in cold blood, and Solomon, who put to death his father's ministers; Elisha, who

¹ *Selections from the Note-Books of Samuel Butler* (Cape, 1930), p. 80.

cursed the children who had giped at his baldness, so that bears came out of the wood to devour them—these are just a few of the Hebrew characters who in Jewish synagogues and, strangely enough, in Christian Sunday Schools, are counted among the heroes of history. When Voltaire read the Old Testament he formed the conclusion that the Jews were “the enemies of the human race.”

Jewry To-day. In the 1930's it was estimated that there were sixteen million Jews. They were scattered through the countries of the world, but most of them had their homes in the great cities and larger towns, where they were more than proportionately represented in business and the professions. Quite a number of them were still herded in the ghettos which had been created in the Middle Ages to contain and segregate the descendants of the people who had crucified Christ.

In large measure the Jews recorded by the statisticians were not only Jews in race, but Jews in religious profession and practice. The Scriptures and the Torah were their rule of life. They made the three regular daily prayers; they kept the Sabbath on Saturday and worshipped in the synagogue; they celebrated the festivals that reminded them of the greatest incidents in their early history as God's Chosen People; they performed the ritual, from circumcision to burial, that marks the Jew's passage through this world.

That was the position in the generation following the Great War. Then came Hitler and his fellow-apostles of race “purity” and race hatred. Anti-Semitism, the movement responsible for so many disgraceful pages in European history, was deliberately revived and whipped up to unprecedented excesses. Jews, as a race and people, were proscribed. They were dispossessed of their property; they were denied the rights of citizenship; they were tortured in concentration camps; they were well-nigh expelled from the human family. When the World War came to an end, it was found that at least a million and a half Jews had perished.

In all the long and terrible story of man's inhumanity to man there is nothing that may be compared, in the stunning vastness of its horror and the awfulness of its iniquity, with this mutilation and murder of a great and gifted people.

CHAPTER XI

CHRISTIANITY

“**I** BELIEVE. . . .” Standing stiffly to attention, the men with shoulders squared, the women with hats and hair put straight and dresses carefully smoothed down, the Christian congregation turns towards the East—a survival, this, of ancient sun worship?—and declares its belief in God the Father Almighty, and in “Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried, He descended into hell; The third day he rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. . . .”

When the great events thus described in the Apostles' Creed took place we cannot be sure. It is generally agreed that the year when Jesus of Nazareth was born—when, as Christians believe, the Godhead took human flesh and became Man—was not the first of the Christian era that is supposed to have had its commencement in the Nativity. The consensus of opinion seems to be that Jesus was born about 4 B.C.; and that, his redemptive mission accomplished, he suffered the pains of death on Calvary in A.D. 29 or 30.

For some thirty-three years, then, he lived on this earth; and concerning by far the greater part of that brief lifetime, history is silent.¹

Though it was an age of very considerable literary production and intellectual ferment, most of the contemporary writers seem to have been altogether unaware that there was living in their midst one who was to attract the love and adoration of millions. Suetonius, the Roman chronicler and purveyor of court scandal, mentions “one Chrestus” who stirred up the Jews in Rome in the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41-54); and Tacitus, the eminent Roman historian, states (in a passage of rather doubtful authenticity) that large numbers of Christians, adherents of “a pestilent

¹ Some scholars have maintained that history is silent because there was little or nothing to tell. For an exposition of the “myth theory” of Christian origins the curious reader is referred to the books of the late Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson: in particular, *Short History of Christianity, Christianity and Mythology*, and *Pagan Christs*, all published by Watts & Co. The subject is presented in summary form in *Jesus: Myth or History?*, by Archibald Robertson (Thinker's Library; Watts, 1946).

superstition," were discovered in Rome at the time of the great fire under Nero (A.D. 64).

Then there is a famous passage in the "Antiquities" (published in A.D. 93) of Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian who played something of a quisling's part in the Palestinian revolt that Titus suppressed in A.D. 70. It runs as follows:

Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day (bk. xviii, c. 3).

Even if genuine the passage does not tell us very much. And it is not genuine. Although for long it was considered to be one of the most conclusive of Christian evidences, since it was included in an historical work by a contemporary writer who was not a Christian—who was moreover a fellow-countryman of Jesus—the passage is now regarded as undoubtedly spurious, as an interpolation in the Josephan text made by a zealous and no doubt well-meaning Christian editor, translator, or transcriber at some later date.

So we are thrown back on the Christian documents which are contained between the covers of the New Testament—the Gospels, that is, and the Pauline Epistles.

Of these the earliest are the Epistles; and from them we learn little more of Jesus than that he had twelve disciples, instituted the Lord's Supper, was crucified, and rose again from the dead. They tell us nothing of any teaching or even of any miracles: Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, a sacrifice offered unto God for the sins of men, in whose name is celebrated a eucharist or religious meal.

It is impossible to date the New Testament books with any certainty; but the Pauline epistles—not necessarily in the form we have them to-day, of course—were written probably between A.D. 52 and 65, the traditional date of Paul's martyrdom in Rome in the reign of Nero. The Gospels are certainly later. Matthew may have been written about A.D. 70, soon after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. Mark may have been written a year or two

before. Luke was later, possibly about A.D. 83. The Gospel of St. John is almost certainly not earlier than A.D. 100.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke have so many similarities in matter and form that they are called the Synoptic Gospels, i.e. they are capable of being brought under one and the same synopsis. But all the same, there are almost as many differences as resemblances, disagreements as agreements; and they present to the critical student a number of problems as to origin, date, and relationship that have given rise to a literature that is as perplexing, contradictory, and confused as it is vast. As to the Gospel that bears the name of John, it presents problems of its own, of equally baffling character.

Here, however, we need not trouble ourselves with the manuscripts or oral traditions that the Evangelists relied on in the composition of the Gospel story. Nor is it our business to disentangle the episodes that constitute that story, and so make a "life" that seems to be in proper sequence and reasonably complete. It is sufficient for our purpose to recall that the three Synoptics are agreed in asserting that Jesus was born in Palestine, towards the end of the reign of Herod the Great; that the home of his childhood was Nazareth, an unimportant town in the province of Galilee; that he came of humble, working-class stock, and himself worked at the trade of carpenter until, arrived at full manhood—traditionally he was in his thirtieth year—he became a public teacher and for some time (three years?) moved about the country, preaching, gathering disciples, and working wonders, until the ruling classes in Church and State thought that he had gone too far in his criticism of the established order. So they had him arrested on a trumped-up charge of treason, and he was executed as a common criminal by the customary and cruel method of crucifixion.

His disciples (it is clear from the narratives) thought that this was the end. But in fact it was the beginning. "On the third day he rose again from the dead;" and ever since that first Easter morn there has been the sharpest of divisions between those who believe that the stone was indeed rolled away from the tomb, that Jesus did indeed triumph over death, return to life for forty days and then ascended to join his Father in heaven; and those who believe with Renan that faith in the Resurrection owes much to the strong imagination of Mary Magdalene—"the passion of one possessed gave to the world a resuscitated God!"—and with Matthew Arnold that:

Now he is dead. Far hence he lies
 In the lorn Syrian town,
 And on his grave, with shining eyes,
 The Syrian stars look down.

Between the two schools of thought there can be no accommodation. It is as easy for the Hindu, who wants to worship the cow, to come to terms with the Muslim, who wants to eat it, as it is for those who hold that Jesus was the Son of God and at the same time Son of Man, to go hand in hand with those who may be prepared to acknowledge indeed his supremacy over all the children of men, but cannot conscientiously affirm that he was "Very God of very God." Our view of the teaching must inevitably be coloured by our attitude towards the question of the Teacher's nature; those who believe in Christ's divinity will unhesitatingly declare their acceptance of the moral rules that he laid down, while the dissentients will judge his ethical teaching, as they judge the teaching of Buddha or Confucius, as that of a "mere man" who, they may yet confess, spake as no man ever spake before or has spoken since.

But here we must do our best to avoid the Scylla of belief and the Charybdis of unbelief. We should endeavour to approach the teaching of Jesus as it is reported in the Gospels with open minds, unclouded by preconceived notions and prejudices of whatever kind.

The Sermon on the Mount. Both Matthew and Luke report a great "Sermon on the Mount," or "Teaching on the Hill" as the words may perhaps be more accurately rendered. The two accounts differ considerably, but it is fairly certain that they had a common origin in a report that has long since been lost. The scene of the discourse was near Capernaum on the shore of the Lake of Galilee, but it is not clear from either narrative whether it was delivered to the little band of disciples or to the multitude who had begun to flock about the young teacher. Nor can it be determined whether it was delivered as a whole in a single session, or whether it was spread over a number of days. Probably the latter is more likely.

Matthew's report of the Sermon is by far the longer. It opens with an octave of Beatitudes (v, 3-12):

Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
 Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven. . . .

Luke's account (vi, 20-23) is not only briefer, but it contains some important differences. Thus it is the poor who are blessed, and not the poor in spirit; and it is those who hunger with a physical hunger who shall be filled. He makes it plain that the rich and those who are full and who laugh now are to be pitied and not envied, for in the time that is coming positions will be completely reversed. Matthew's account reflects a man of religious temperament; Luke—judging from this passage at least—had the makings of a social revolutionary.

Matthew was furthermore a Hebrew, and it is noticeable that he goes on to report Jesus as saying that he came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets but to fulfil them. Whoever breaks even one of the most insignificant of the ancient commandments is excluded from the "Kingdom of Heaven"; only those whose goodness far exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees—the professional expounders and orthodox interpreters of the Jewish faith—shall enter therein.

Thus a man who is angry with his brother without a cause or who calls him a fool; the man who casts a lascivious glance at a woman; the man who puts away his wife for any cause but fornication, and he who marries a divorced woman; the man who takes an oath; the man who resists evil, who does not hand over his cloak to him who has stolen his coat or turn the left cheek to him who has struck his right; the man who makes a parade of his charities and prays so that everyone may remark his devoutness; the man who puts on a sad face when fasting; the man who worries about what he is going to eat and drink and wear to-morrow; the man who lays up treasure on earth and not in heaven; the man who judges others—all these are guilty in the light of the new ethic.

In olden days the commandment was to love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But now there is a new commandment:

Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. . . .

There is very little theology in Jesus's teaching: that came later, with Paul. The carpenter from Nazareth taught no abstruse doctrine concerning God: to him God was Father, and he did not think it necessary to explain or amplify the affectionate description. The title "Father," it has been remarked, appears fifteen times in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus himself, we may suppose, had known a good father's loving care and guidance; and he was speaking out of his own experience when he used a term and described a relationship which must have appealed to his hearers with much force and have been perfectly understood. Just as a human father cares for the ne'er-do-well as he does for the son who is a credit to him—surely it is reasonable to suppose that Jesus had some local family in mind when he told the parable of the Prodigal Son?—so God makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends His rain on the just and on the unjust.

In the parables Jesus is at his best. He uses the most homely phrases, and does not disdain an amusing touch now and again. He stresses the value of individuality. To the Father every man, every woman, *counts*. Look how the heavenly Father feeds the birds, he says; they don't reap, they don't gather into barns, yet they are not allowed to go hungry. Aren't you much better than they? And then there is the story of the Good Shepherd who leaves the ninety and nine sheep safely folded and goes after the one which is lost until he finds it, and returns with it on his shoulders rejoicing. Even so, said the Galilean, there shall be more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.

This was Jesus's great act of originality, Renan says—this conception of the father-and-son relationship of God and man. In this he had nothing in common with his race. "Neither the Jew nor the Mussulman has understood this delightful theology of love. The God of Jesus is not that tyrannical master who kills us, damns us, or saves us, according to His pleasure. The God of Jesus is our Father . . . The God of Jesus is not the partial despot who has chosen Israel for His people, and specially protects them. He is the God of humanity."¹

The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man is the sum and substance of the Sermon on the Mount. .

The Golden Rule. Embedded in the Sermon is the famous precept, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do

¹ *Life of Jesus*, ch. 5.

ye even so to them." This covers only the duties arising out of human relationships, but at a later stage of his ministry Jesus expanded it into a summary of duty covering the whole field of obligation. We have the incident described in Mark.

Jesus had been engaged in an argumentative tussle with the Sadducees, the right wing of Jewish orthodoxy, who had done their best to trip him up but had been completely confounded. One of the Scribes, we are told, who had been listening—and was not altogether displeased, perhaps, at the discomfiture of the Sadducees—put to him a question, Which was the first, the most important, of the commandments?

Jesus answered him out of the Old Testament. The first of all the commandments, he said, is "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

"And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." ¹

"Well, master," rejoined the Scribe, "thou hast said the truth; for there is one God, and there is none other but He: And to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

And Jesus said to him, "*You* are not far from the Kingdom of God." ²

The Kingdom of God. What Jesus really meant by this phrase of the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven, is far from certain, and the interpretations that have been advanced are not at all convincing. Most orthodox expositors would seem to be agreed that the Kingdom was ethical and spiritual and therefore universal, its membership being open to all, irrespective of sex, race and nationality, class and creed. Yet among Jesus's own disciples there were at least some—for example, Peter, who endeavoured to put up an armed resistance to the Roman military police when they came to arrest the Master in the Garden of Gethsemane, and Judas—who may have betrayed the Lord in order to "force his hand" into proclaiming himself the long-expected Messiah—who had understood the phrase to mean that Jesus was about to establish a political kingdom here on earth. Their excited fancy conceived a

¹ See Deuteronomy vi.

² Mark xii, 28-34.

theocracy ruled by Jesus in the name of the Father, a kingdom in which the Jews would have the best places and appointments—the mother of James and John asked that her sons might sit next to Jesus, i.e. in the places of highest honour, when he came into his Kingdom—even though the Gentiles were not excluded absolutely.

Many sayings attributed by the Evangelists to Jesus would seem to support the view that he himself expected to return as the Messiah at no distant date to establish the Divine Kingdom. "This generation" should not pass away, he declared on one occasion, before the Son of Man should come in clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to gather together the elect from the four winds. But other prophecies would seem to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, as yet some thirty or forty years in the future. "Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. . . ."

After the lapse of nineteen hundred years it may seem a small matter enough that the hopes and expectations of the first Christians—or the Christians before Christianity—were disappointed. Time after time the date of the Advent, of the Lord's Return to judge the nations and then reign as monarch during the Millennium, has been pushed forward as each date has come and gone without any out-of-the-way occurrence. Still to-day there are considerable numbers of Christians who really live in daily anticipation of the Lord's coming, and all Christians are supposed to believe that that great and terrible day will certainly dawn.

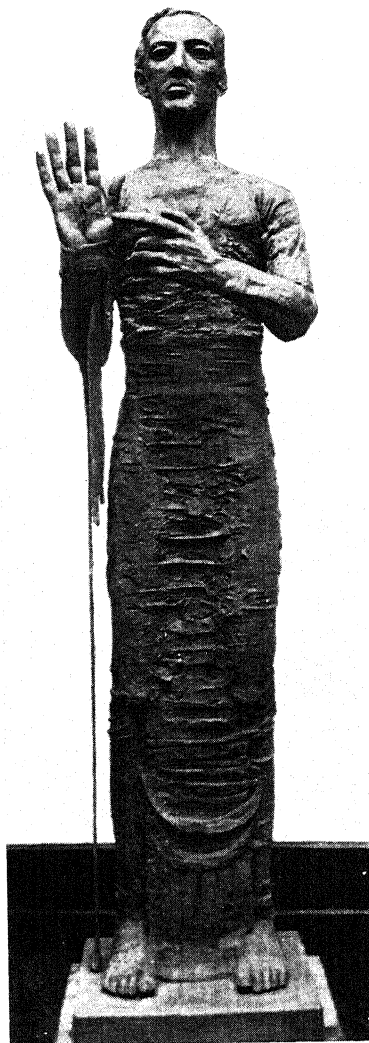
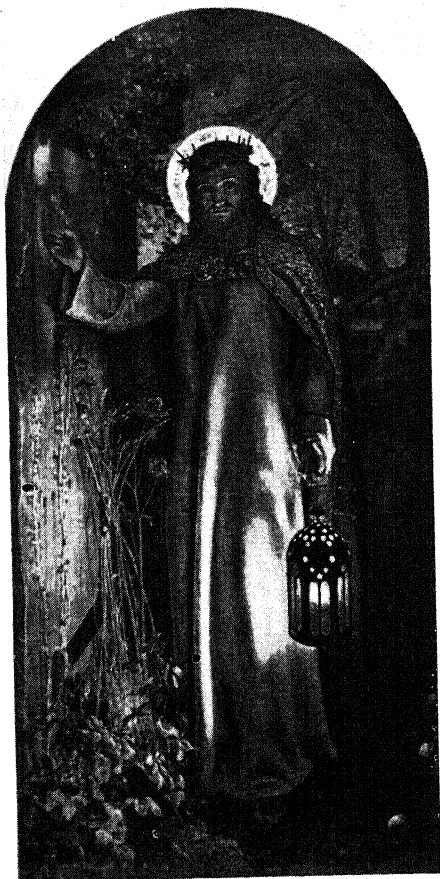
But it is not a small matter whether Christians hold that the Kingdom of God is something here and now and that we are or can be its citizens, or whether they believe that the Kingdom has its location in the world beyond the grave. Other-worldliness has had a marked effect on moral behaviour and human conduct generally. If we are sincerely convinced that this life is only the ante-room to a mansion in the sky, we may not grumble over-much at our poverty or distress, our lowly position, at the injustices that we are forced to endure at the hands of the mighty and proud. Our disabilities and misfortunes are only temporary. Our sufferings will be more than compensated for in the life to come. In heaven we shall receive our reward; and those who have treated us rudely, who have tyrannized over us—they, too, shall receive their reward.

Such a conception of the Kingdom has played into the hands of the vested interests in Church and State. "Religion," said Karl

Below

THE CHRIST
OF
HOLMAN HUNT

*By permission of
the Dean and Chapter
of St. Paul's Cathedral,
London*



THE CHRIST
OF EPSTEIN

*By permission of
Jacob Epstein*

Marx, "is the sigh of the hard-pressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, as it is the soul of soulless circumstances. It is the opium of the people."

The case has been put with admirable clearness by the Hammonds in their "Town Labourer." Writing of the early years of the nineteenth century, when the Industrial Revolution was in full flood, they say:

The devout Christian, confronted with the spectacle of wrong and injustice, may draw either of two contrary conclusions. In the eyes of his religion the miner or weaver is just as important as the landlord or the cotton lord. Clearly then, one will argue, it is the duty of a Christian State to prevent any class, however obscure and trivial its place in the world may seem to be, from sinking into degrading conditions of life. Every soul is immortal, and the consequences of ill-treatment and neglect in the brief day of its life on earth will be unending. If, therefore, society is so organized as to impose such conditions on any class, the Christian will demand the reform of its institutions. For such minds Christianity provides a standard by which to judge government, the industrial and economic order, the life of society, the way in which it distributes wealth and opportunities.

This was the attitude of such high-minded aristocratic philanthropists as the 7th Earl of Shaftesbury. But some minds, the Hammonds go on, drew a different moral from the equality that Christianity teaches.

Every human soul is a reality, but the important thing about a human soul is its final destiny, and that destiny does not depend on the circumstances of this life. The world has been created on a plan of apparent injustice by a Providence that combined infinite power with infinite compassion. The arrangements that seem so capricious are really the work of that Power. But the same Power has given to the men and women who seem to live in such bitter and degrading surroundings, an escape from its cares by the exercise of their spiritual faculties. It is those faculties that make all men equal. Here they stand, in Marcus Aurelius's phrase, for a brief space between the two eternities, and no misery or poverty can prevent a soul from winning happiness in the world to come. Thus whereas one man looking out on the chaos of the world calls for reform, the other calls for contemplation: one says, Who could tolerate such injustice? the other says, Who would not rejoice that there is another world? One says, Give these people the conditions of a decent life; the other says, Teach them to read the Bible. . . .¹

The opinion of the governed is the real foundation of all government, wrote Dicey, paraphrasing one of Hume's pregnant sayings. What centuries of wrongs done by men to men have dragged out

¹ *The Town Labourer*, 1760-1832, by J. L. and B. Hammond (Longmans), pp. 223-224

their weary course because the majority have learned from priest or presbyter that it is God's will that things should be as they are, and that every wrong will be righted, some day, in heaven! What scoundrels have flourished on the superstitions that they themselves may or may not have believed in! Is it unreasonable to suppose that if men had believed less they would have acted better? Surely, if they had thought less about the world beyond the grave they might have made this world a far happier and healthier place to live in.

Only when men began to worry themselves less about the soul and its eternal destiny did they really begin to concern themselves with the body and its present discomfort and misery. When men *believed*, they had neither time nor inclination for social reform, let alone scientific research and the pursuit of knowledge and the creation of mundane beauty. When they *doubted*, they began to improve the lot of the masses in town and country who for centuries had wallowed in squalor. They passed sanitary laws and factory acts. They formed trade unions. They emancipated the slaves and liberated women. They worked for peace among the nations, and planned a world made one in brotherhood. They recognized the rights of children and of animals. As the power of theology has decayed, men have become more and more humane.

The Ideal Jesus. It is probably true to say that most people's idea of what Jesus looked like, what manner of a man he was, has been obtained from the coloured pictures hung on the walls of Sunday Schools or printed as frontispieces in popular editions of the Scriptures. In the course of centuries artists have arrived at and perpetuated a conventional representation which is now so generally received—although historically there is no foundation for it—that any departure therefrom is regarded with feelings of horror and disgust. This was seen some little time ago, in the early nineteen-twenties, when Epstein outraged the susceptibilities of the orthodox in both religion and art by producing a statue of Christ which was very different from the generally accepted portrayal. The first thing that many who saw it remarked was that Jesus had no beard, or none worth speaking of—and of course he must have had a beard, a flowing, nicely-combed and arranged beard such as all the great artists up to now had given him. Then the hands and the feet were disproportionately big, and the body, encased in a close-fitting garment, had the appearance of an Egyptian mummy. This Christ of Epstein was young and sparely built, ascetic-looking, even emaciated.

Yet he fitted closely enough the description in Isaiah that has been supposed to refer to him. He had no comeliness nor beauty that anyone should desire him. Obviously he was a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief, one who had been wounded and stricken and despired. If there was no grace in the gaunt frame, there was tremendous vitality. Epstein showed a man who has been dead but is now alive. "See," he tells Thomas, and with his left hand points to the evidential hole in the palm of his right, "you didn't believe me, but I *have* risen, as I said I was going to. Just prove it for yourself. Put your finger into this hole in my hand, the one made by the nail, and in this one in my side—that's where the Roman soldier thrust in his spear. And look, there are the nail holes in my feet!" It is not difficult to imagine Epstein's Christ saying that; and Thomas, having seen and heard, could do no other than answer, "My Lord and my God."

This may well have been the Jesus who flayed the Pharisees and Sadducees with his tongue, who whipped the cringing money-changers out of the Temple precincts, who strode ahead of his disciples up and down the lanes and fields of Palestine, supremely confident in his mission and his goal. This Jesus may well have stopped the slaving of epilepsy, and commanded the demoniac spirits so that they "came out" and obeyed him.

But is he the Christ who took a child and set him in the midst of those who pressed about him, and took him in his arms and said: "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name receiveth me," and "Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven"? Is he the Christ who uttered the sublime invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"?

This is most certainly not the "Gentle Jesus meek and mild" of the children's hymn. Then is it the Christ who turned the water into wine at the marriage-feast to save the embarrassment of his hostess, and who dined so often and so convivially with the tax-collectors and sinners that the more strait-laced pointed with scorn at him as a glutton and a wine-bibber? Is it the Christ who showed such divine compassion to the fallen women who were drawn to him by an irresistible compulsion—the Christ who challenged those who thought themselves to be without sin, to throw the first stone at the woman taken in the very act of adultery—the Christ who talked so intimately with the much-married woman of Samaria beside the well in Sychar?

Is it this Christ, or that Christ, or the other Christ? The truth of the matter would seem to be that the Gospels show us not one Christ but many Christs, and the artists through the ages have seized upon one or the other to embody in stone or portray on canvas or in fresco. But is this of any practical, in particular any ethical, importance? Surely yes, since those Christians who hold that as Christ's followers they should strive to act as he would have them act, have been faced with an extremely difficult problem. There are as many Christs as moral exemplars as there are Christs in art.

A good Buddhist or a good Confucian, even a good Muslim, runs true to type. But it is a reflection of the complexity of the Figure portrayed in the Gospels that he has been the inspiration of men and women who agree only in their professed devotion.

The hermit in his cave, and the squalid ascetic squatting on the top of his pillar; the selfish monk in his cell, and the selfless sister of mercy in the lazar-house; the Christian warrior on the battlefield, and the "conchie" before the tribunal; the old gentleman in scarlet in St. Peter's, and the local preacher who drops his h's in the village Bethel; the don in his scholastic retreat, and the missionary translating the Scriptures into a language without a literature—all claim to be followers of Christ, to be inspired by his ethic, to hold and live by his code of morals.

What would Jesus do? For fifteen hundred years and more, men and women in many countries and in all walks of life have asked themselves "What would Jesus do?", and have tried to act in accordance with what they thought was the right answer.

This was the question put to himself by the clergyman in Charles M. Sheldon's melodramatic and best-selling novel, "*In His Steps*." He asked the members of his fashionable, wealthy, and highly respectable congregation to pledge themselves to do nothing for a whole year without first asking the question, "What would Jesus do?" The results were thought to be very startling at the time.

The minister went without his holiday, and sent a poor family away in his stead. The editor refused to print any report of a notorious prize-fight, cut out advertisements of whisky and tobacco, and stopped issuing a Sunday edition; he was saved from bankruptcy by the financial assistance rendered him by a dollar-millionairess, who went "slumming" and started a kind of settlement. One night she took home with her to the family mansion a drunken young street-walker, who shortly afterwards stopped with her own head a bottle intended for her benefactor; the young woman's

funeral was something to remember. The rich heiress's friend, the girl with the golden voice, refused an offer to go on the concert platform, but electrified audiences in a mission-tent in the downtown area. Her brother, a young man about town, was turned down by the heiress because he was without a purpose in life. He reformed, however; tried to convert his fellow-clubmen; and won the girl's hand in the end. But a successful novelist, who had seen the gleam but refused to follow it, turned out a string of novels which were clever, but cold and cynical. Each had a sting in it, a reminder of their author's denial of the Master. . . .

Sheldon's book, published in 1896, has appeared in edition after edition, running to twenty million copies—the world's record for a work of fiction—and is still read on both sides of the Atlantic. No doubt it has led many a man, many a woman, to ask the question, "What would Jesus do?", and has not been without an effect in real life. But in the book and in life the question is not by any manner of means an easy one to answer. As the inheritor of a million dollars remarked, "Jesus never owned any property, and there is nothing in his example to guide me in the use of mine."

Many Christians have been similarly perplexed; and in every age there must have been some who have wondered whether the ethic that was suited to a peasant community in an out-of-the-way province of the Roman world at the beginning of our era, might be altogether appropriate for communities living in very different circumstances of time and place and condition. The average Christian has evaded the difficulty by assuming that the more onerous precepts are not to be taken too literally. But this compromising attitude has been frowned on by others; and there have always been those who have given little or no thought to the things of this world, trusting in the Lord to provide. They have not always been disappointed in their Micawber-like expectations. But the same cannot be said of those, a not inconsiderable number, who have lived in daily, even hourly, expectation of the Second Coming.

Hudson Taylor, a veteran missionary of the China Inland Mission, used to relate that as a young medical student he thought that the Lord might come at any time, and so he went through his bookshelves and sold or gave away a good many of his books and similarly disposed of any spare clothes he had. In later years, when on the way back to China, he comforted himself with the thought that he might see his wife and children even before he got back to

the mission-station, since in the event of the Lord's coming, "I would meet my loved ones in the air."

In so far as the Christian ethic is summed up in the Golden Rule, it is no doubt true to say that it is just as applicable to the twentieth century as it was in the first. But the Golden Rule is not exclusively Christian. Whether in its positive or negative form, it is to be found in practically all the great religions.¹

Ethics in the Pauline Epistles. It has often been argued that the real founder of Christianity was not Jesus but Paul, the epileptic tent-maker from Tarsus who "saw the light" on the road to Damascus and became the first in the long and honourable line of Christian missionaries.

Jesus was a moral teacher. He said that he came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets of Judaism. He seems to have known little, and to have cared less, about the religious and philosophical ideas of the world outside Palestine—indeed, outside the little circle of lake-side towns in Galilee where his all too few years were spent. But Paul was intensely interested in other religions, other ways of thought. He had some knowledge of classical literature, and he had so much of the Stoic in him that it was once supposed that the Apostle and the pagan moralist Seneca had been in correspondence. In his home town he must have come across members of the Oriental cults, and the gods and goddesses of classical paganism had been flaunted before his eyes. However much he may have admired the pure ethical teaching of Jesus, to what extent he may have fallen beneath the spell of the Master whom he had never seen in the flesh and of whose deeds and sayings he seems to have had a not very extensive knowledge, he was undoubtedly influenced by the prevailing religious conceptions of the Roman world. He had seen sacrifices smoking on the altars; he had stood next to men offering the pinch of incense before the imperial bust. He had heard of saviour-gods, deities who were supposed to have died to give their followers eternal life. But he was also a Jew by birth and upbringing, and so in his theology we have a combination of the Jewish doctrine of Adam's fall and of the Oriental religious concept of salvation by the blood of the sacrificed god. Blood seems to have been an obsession with him—that is, if he was (what is widely doubted) the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which the idea of a righteous but vengeful deity pacified and appeased by the shedding of the blood of Christ finds such prominent expression.

¹ See p. 242 for the Golden Rule as stated in other religions.

For just as under the Jewish law "almost all things are by the law purged with blood," so under the new dispensation, under the new covenant or testament, "without shedding of blood is no remission." Perhaps it is not unreasonable to suppose that Paul was among the first, if he was not actually the first, to think of the Lord's Supper as not merely a memorial feast, but as a sacrificial rite. He may well have fastened on Christ's words, "This is my body . . . this is my blood," and imported into them a literalness which can hardly have been intended when they were first uttered in the upper room.

It was Paul, then, who broke the link which bound Christianity to Judaism, and it is in his writings that we find the most complete and systematic exposition of the Christian ethic.

In the 12th and 13th chapters of the Epistle to the Romans there is an ample statement of the way of life that a Christian should follow. Abhor that which is evil, the Apostle says; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly disposed one to another.

Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints [i.e. fellow believers]; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. . . . Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. . . . If thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

In the next chapter the Christian is required to "be subject unto the higher powers," since "there is no power but of God," and "the powers that be are ordained of God." So that whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth God's ordinance, and they shall receive to themselves damnation. . . .

Rulers are God's ministers, Paul goes on; they are entitled to tribute, and Christians must render it—tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. Then he recapitulates the commandments, briefly comprehended in the saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians (xiii) is the fine and deservedly famous panegyric of love, as the modern translators render the word that in the Authorized Version is given as "charity." From "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,"

to "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love," the majestic language moves as a perfect expression of the noble thought. Even if only this passage had been preserved, it would have been sufficient to place Paul in the front rank of the writers of the ancient world.

Paul's view of Woman. Paul's view of women and the sexual relationship has been often adversely criticized. It is good for a man not to touch a woman, he writes in his first letter to the Corinthians, but so as to avoid fornication every man should have a wife of his own and every woman should have a husband. A married woman is not mistress of her own person, nor is a husband master of his own person: each partner has certain rights. "Do not refuse one another, unless perhaps it is just for a time and by mutual consent, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer and may then associate again; lest the Adversary begin to tempt you because of your deficiency in self-control."¹

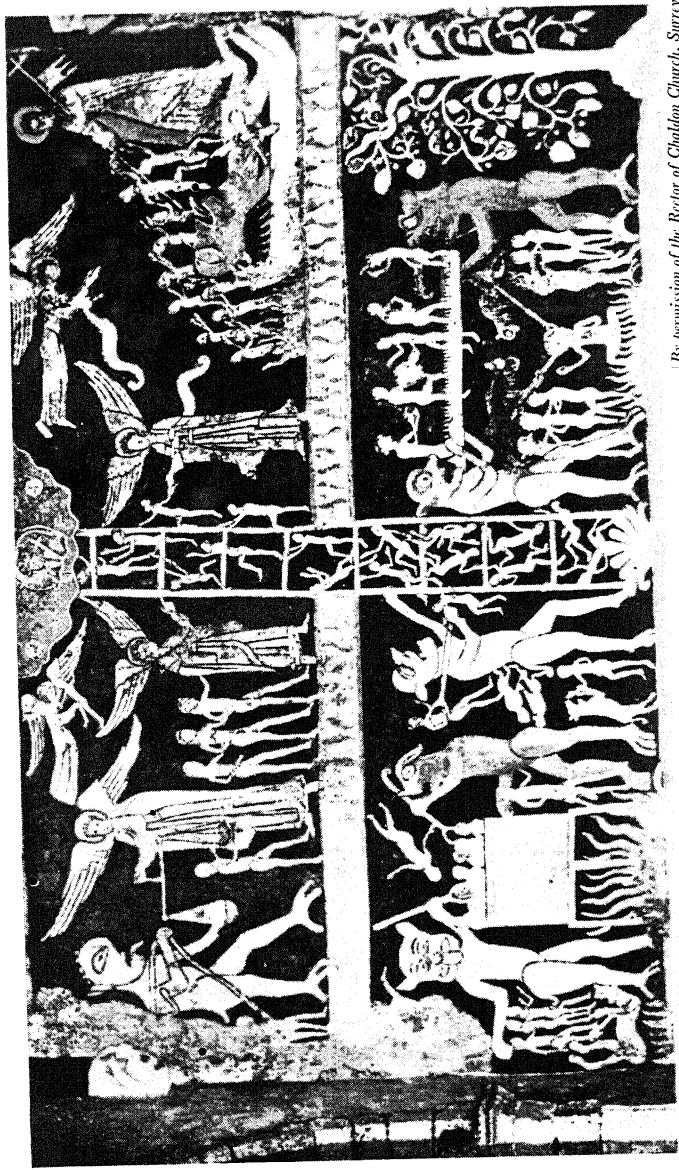
All the same, Paul goes on, it would be better if everyone lived as he lives himself; it is better for the unmarried, and women who are widows, to remain celibate. But if they cannot maintain self-control, by all means let them marry; for marriage is better than the fever of passion.

Are you bound to a wife? Don't seek to get free. Are you free from the marriage-bond? Then don't seek a wife. Yet if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a maiden marries, she has not sinned. The Apostle supports his plea for celibacy with the argument that an unmarried man concerns himself with the Lord's business—how he shall please the Lord; but a married man concerns himself with the business of the world—how he shall please his wife. So it is with women. An unmarried woman is concerned to be holy in body and spirit, but the wife concerns herself with pleasing her husband. But a father's right to allow or forbid his daughter to marry is absolute. He who gives his daughter in marriage does well, and yet he who does not give her in marriage will do better.

A woman who becomes a widow is at liberty to marry again whom she will, provided he is a Christian. But in Paul's judgment her state is the more enviable if she remains as she is—and in saying so, the Apostle thinks the Spirit of God speaks through him.

In this same Epistle there is a very queer passage that has wrinkled many a brow. It is in the eleventh chapter, and has to do with women's hair.

¹ 1 Corinthians vii, Dr. R. F. Weymouth's translation.



(By permission of the Rector of Chaldon Church, Surrey)

THE CHRISTIAN HELL PICTURED BY A MEDIEVAL ARTIST

Known as the 'Ladder of the Soul's Salvation,' the 12th- or 13th-century wall-painting in the church of Chaldon, Surrey, depicts in lurid fashion the fate of the damned as taught by the medieval Church. Souls are being weighed between the Devil and St. Michael (top left). Christ harrows hell (top right). Below, two powerful demons are plunging their victims into a great cauldron; another devil picks souls from off the ladder up which they are trying to escape; and (right) souls are endeavouring to pass along a bridge of spikes. Other demons are tempting couples to illicit intercourse, or are busy tormenting the souls of the lost.

The argument of the chapter opens with the statement that the head of every man is Christ, the head of every woman is the man, i.e. her husband, and the head of Christ is God. Woman, man, Christ, God, form an ascending scale, in which the second is to the first as the third to the second, and the fourth to the third. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonours his head—Christ. Every woman who does the opposite dishonours *her* head—her husband: it is exactly the same as if she had her hair cut short. If the woman be not covered or will not wear a veil, let her also cut off her hair. But since it is a shame for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her be covered or wear a veil. A man ought not to cover his head, however, since he is the image and glory of God, while woman is the glory of the man.

“For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels” (A.V.).

Dr. Weymouth prefers “symbol of subjection” to “power,” and it has been suggested that the passage means that the man who covers his head for prayer and prophesy dishonours it by suggesting that he is under authority, whereas he is the supreme of created beings; while for a woman to be unveiled is tantamount to having her hair cut off altogether, and among the Jews this was the punishment of an adulteress (as in our own day in the countries of German-occupied Europe it was the punishment of those women who were accused of too intimate associations with the enemy). The absence of a veil would imply that she was a woman of easy virtue, and the unveiled woman would be in danger of lewd approaches and possibly assault by the “angels.” Paul believed implicitly in those “angels,” although he called them demons. He knew well enough what happened to unveiled women, i.e. the religious prostitutes, of whom there were more than a thousand attached to the temples of the goddess of love in Corinth: he was not prepared to see Christian women exposed to insult and molestation, in a city that was proverbial for its wealth and luxury and the name of which was a byword for profligacy.

The Apostle clinches the argument by claiming that Nature itself teaches that if a man has long hair it is a dishonour to him. “But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.”

In our own age St. Paul’s ruling has been set aside. During the

World War the archbishops of the Church of England let it be known that in future women and girls might be allowed to enter churches uncovered. Nor did they insist that the hair must not be cut short. Thus the scramble in the church porch—the search for a handkerchief that would cover the locks sufficiently to satisfy the verger—became a thing of the past.

Another of Paul's dictates that has been at least partially repudiated is that bidding women keep silent in church. "It is not permitted unto them to speak," he tells the Corinthians; "if they will learn anything let them ask their husbands at home. . . ." In his first letter to Timothy, too, he declares that he does not permit a woman to teach, nor to have authority over a man. She must remain silent, since Adam was made first and then Eve, and Eve was deceived first and then Adam.

The Methodist Conference has a much higher opinion of women: it not only lets them talk in church, but licences them to preach.

Paul's Final Counsels. In his Epistle to the Ephesians (v), written when he was a prisoner in Rome, Paul exposes himself yet again to the ire of the feminists. "Wives," he commands, "submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." As the church obeys its Head, so "let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." But it is only fair to say that the Apostle was quick to add that, just as Christ loves his church, so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."

There is much more of the Christian ethic in this Epistle. Live and act lovingly, the Apostle tells his distant audience, as Christ has loved you and died for you. Fornication and every kind of impurity and covetousness—don't let them be so much as mentioned among you. Avoid shameful and foolish talk and low jesting. For be well assured that no fornicator or immoral person and no money-grubber—or in other words idol-worshipper—has any share awaiting him in the Kingdom of Christ and of God. Don't let anyone deceive you with empty words. Don't over-indulge in wine—a thing in which excess is so easy—but drink deeply of God's Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

"Children, be obedient to your parents as a Christian duty, for it is a duty. And you fathers, do not irritate your children, but

bring them up tenderly with true Christian training and advice.

"Slaves, be obedient to your earthly masters, with respect and eager anxiety to please, and with simplicity of motive as if you were obeying Christ. . . . And you masters, act towards your slaves on the same principles and refrain from threats. For in Heaven there is One who is your Master as well as theirs, and merely earthly distinctions there are none with Him."

In conclusion the Apostle urges those early Christians to "Put on the complete armour of God, so as to be able to stand firm against all the stratagems of the Devil. For ours is not a conflict with mere flesh and blood, but with the despotisms, the empires, the forces that control and govern this dark world—the spiritual hosts of evil arrayed against us in the heavenly warfare."¹

These injunctions are largely repeated in Paul's letter to the Colossians, also penned during his imprisonment in Rome.

Another of Paul's epistles written from a place of confinement—in Rome or perhaps earlier, in Cæsarea—is that addressed to the Christian community in the Greek city of Philippi, on the borders of Macedonia and Thrace. It contains one great ethical pronouncement.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.²

In the First Epistle to the Thessalonians the Apostle gives the eminently sensible and practical advice to "study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing."

The Pastoral Epistles are largely concerned with matters of church discipline and oversight, but we may note in the first letter to Timothy the oft-quoted aphorism, "The love of money is the root of all evil,"—in the R.V., by the way, this is rendered, "a root of all kinds of evil"—and the advice, given by an ageing man to a young one on the threshold of his career, to "drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."

In the second letter to Timothy the young man is enjoined to flee youthful lusts and to follow righteousness, faith, charity, and

¹ Ephesians vi, Dr. R. F. Weymouth's translation.

² Philippians iv, 8.

peace. He should also avoid foolish discussions with ignorant men, since these so often give rise to strife.

The little letter to Titus contains a good deal of excellent counsel similar to that already reviewed. The young disciple is told to exhort the old men of the Christian community to be sober-minded and temperate, grave and charitable, sound in doctrine, while the old women should be exhorted to avoid slanderings and too much wine-drinking. They should teach the young women to be affectionate to their husbands and their children, to be sober-minded, pure in their lives, industrious in their homes, kind, and submissive to their husbands. Young men, too, must be discreet; slaves must always obey their owners; and the Christians as a body must submit themselves to the "principalities and powers" who are in authority over them. They must learn to "speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men." In this epistle we find the striking and suggestive saying, "Unto the pure all things are pure," which has long since passed into proverbial philosophy.

Faith, not Works. Leaving the Pauline epistles we come to James. In this little document appears what is perhaps the most practical definition of religion to be found in the New Testament. "Pure religion and undefiled," it runs, "before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." The general outlook on life in the Epistle is more akin to the Old Testament ethic than to anything distinctively Christian. Throughout, the emphasis is laid not on belief but on good works. What does it profit a man, asks the author, if he says he has faith, and yet he hasn't any "works"? Can faith save him? And if a man says to the poor, "Depart in peace; be warmed and filled," and yet gives them nothing to eat and to wear, where's the good? "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead." The writer, like all the early Christians, expected the imminent return of the Lord, and made this a principal incentive to virtue; but his piety is of a gentle and lovable type, that compares favourably with some other expositions of the Christian way of life.

In the First Epistle of Peter we may note the passage: "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood [i.e. the Christian community]. Fear God. Honour the king." In the next chapter we see that Peter and Paul thought alike on the subject of wifely duty. Paul's injunctions have been quoted already. Here is Peter's behest: "Ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands. . . ." It is Peter

who calls the wife the "weaker vessel." Another of his remembered sayings is his description of the Devil as a roaring lion, who "walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." It is he, too, who says, "charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

Then the three Epistles attributed to St. John have for their main theme the quality of love. The Apostle writes as a father to his dearly-loved children. "God is love." "He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love." "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." And again, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." It is a fitting note on which to close this brief examination of the New Testament ethic.

Criticism of Christian Morals. Most Christians believe, strongly and with deep sincerity, that Christianity sets the highest, the noblest, standards of moral conduct. That view is challenged, however, not only by those who have been brought up in other faiths, but by a not inconsiderable number who have been born of Christian parents in a Christian land and educated in Christian principles. James Mill, for instance, the Utilitarian philosopher of the early part of the last century, travelled so far from his native Presbyterianism that he came to regard Christianity as the greatest enemy of morality, because (his son John Stuart Mill tells us in his "Autobiography") in the first place it sets up "fictitious excellences—belief in creeds, devotional feelings, and ceremonies, not connected with the good of human-kind—and causing these to be accepted as substitutes for genuine virtues; but above all, by radically vitiating the standard of morals; making it consist in doing the will of a being, on whom it lavishes indeed the phrases of adulation, but whom in sober truth it depicts as eminently hateful." A hundred times, J. S. Mill goes on, he had heard his father declare that all ages and nations have represented their gods as wicked, "that mankind have gone on adding trait after trait till they reached the most perfect conception of wickedness which the human mind can devise, and have called this God, and prostrated themselves before it. This *ne plus ultra* of wickedness he considered to be embodied in what is commonly presented to mankind as the creed of Christianity. Think (he used to say) of a being who would make a Hell—who would create the human race with the infallible foreknowledge, and

therefore with the intention, that the great majority of them were to be consigned to horrible and everlasting torment. . . ."¹

John Stuart Mill himself repudiated the God preached from Victorian pulpits. "I will call no being good," he wrote, "who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go."

But for many hundreds of years Christian men and women *did* believe in this sort of God, and *had* to believe, if they were to escape prison and torture, the rack and the stake. No doctrine ever framed by the mind of man has been productive of such a mass of human misery as this of a place of everlasting torment to which a Deity, whom it is blasphemy to criticize in the slightest measure, consigns all those who, however good the lives they have led, have failed to render him the measure of adulation that is deemed to be his due.

It is not the least of the charges that have been brought against Christianity that it introduced the frightful dogma of the damnation of all unbaptized infants.

Throughout the Middle Ages belief in hell fire was unquestioning; and since the common people could not read, pictures of the fate said by their spiritual guides to be in store for them if they disobeyed the teaching of the Church were painted on the walls of the parish churches.

In an ignorant age these doom wall-paintings were no doubt a powerful incentive to virtue. The villager of Chaldon, in Surrey, must have gazed with apprehension on the "Ladder of the Soul's Salvation" which since the last decade of the twelfth century has been painted on the wall. The great cauldron over a fire, in which a batch of souls is being stirred up by a pair of huge demons, doubtless gave him a shiver. The maiden who loved to dance on the village green saw the demons biting the feet of three girls whose sin was over-indulgence in dancing. The housewife who threw to the dogs the food that ought to have been given to the poor—well, there she is, and one of the hounds of hell is biting her hand. The toper has his attention drawn to an unhappy soul with a bottle, in a place where thirst is perpetual and never can be quenched. To the usurer is pointed out a man who loved money more than virtue, and who is now sitting in the flames with his money-bags tied around him while he vomits gold pieces. On each side of him are evil spirits doing their best by the most openly immodest

¹ J. S. Mill, *Autobiography* (O.U.P. World's Classics, 1924), p. 34.

gestures to induce naked couples to indulge their lust, and so furnish two more recruits for hell. A great big devil is busily engaged in picking off souls with a two-pronged fork as they strive desperately to escape from the torture-house of the damned to the heavenly region above. Behind him stand a couple in a most suggestive attitude: the woman holds a piece of money in her hand, the price of whoredom. Elsewhere souls are being weighed, and Christ is overcoming the Devil and thrusting him down into the flames of the place where he belongs.¹

To-day we can smile at such theological crudities—although the belief in hell is still officially maintained in the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches—while valuing their representation as artistic documents of a long-past age. But our ancestors did not smile. They had no mental reservations. To them heaven and hell were places as real as Rome or Jerusalem, and they had not the slightest doubt that in due season they would be sent by God's decree to the one place or to the other.

Closely connected with the doctrine of a place of torment in which not only the wicked in deed but unbelievers in the Christian dogmas expiate their sins to all eternity, is that persecuting spirit, that spirit of intolerance, which has been responsible for so many dreadful pages in the record of man's martyrdom of man. If it is believed that wrong belief is as heinous as wicked conduct, then it may be argued that it is one's bounden duty to do all in one's power to stop the mouths of those who are leading their fellows astray. This is the real justification of persecution, if any justification is possible. Throughout the ages when the Church controlled the temporal power as well as the spiritual, it strove desperately, and not always unsuccessfully, to extirpate what it accounted heresy. As late as 1877 Lord Acton wrote, "There are in our day many educated men who think it right to persecute."

The religious wars that marked the break-up of Christendom in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were another manifestation of the persecuting spirit. And there can be no doubt that on the one side and on the other there were many good men who were convinced that they were the servants of the Most High, and that what they did was for His ultimate glory. But these wars were not exceptional. It is indeed strange that the nations which profess to follow the Prince of Peace are those which history records as being the most persistently pugnacious.

¹ See Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner's *The Christian Hell* (Watts).

Just why the Christian nations have been so given to war is a matter to which the historians have not seen fit to devote much attention. Very likely the reasons include physical constitution, traditional inheritances, climatic and other environmental factors—and, it may perhaps be added, the example of “God’s chosen people,” the Jews, whose bloody doings are chronicled in that Testament which has always tended to predominate over the one which contains the specifically Christian revelation.

Whatever the reason, it is a fact that orthodox moralists have never experienced much difficulty in reconciling Christianity with war. There has been only one Tolstoy. The Society of Friends is one of the smallest, though by no means the least worthy and honoured, of the sects. The conscientious objectors in the World Wars were not numerous enough to constitute a nuisance or even a matter of concern to the authorities.

War is often extolled in the Old Testament, and not condemned in the New; and most expounders of the Christian ethic would seem to be much more concerned with “whoremongers” than with war-mongers. In common Christian usage, sin is practically synonymous with immorality, and immorality is sexual intercourse outside wedlock. “For some strange reason,” Aldous Huxley has written in “Grey Eminence”—that mordant study of the devoted Catholic priest who was the malign influence behind Cardinal Richelieu—“murder has always seemed more respectable than fornication. Few people are shocked when they hear God described as the God of Battles; but what an outcry there would be if anyone spoke of Him as the God of brothels!”

Herbert Spencer was so impressed by the inconsistency of creed and practice that he distinguished two religions existing side by side. The religion of amity, derived from the books of the New Testament, is what men believe they believe. The religion of enmity, of which the Latin epics and histories serve as gospels, is what nearly all men actually believe. That which a man prays for as a virtue on Sunday, he scorns as a vice on Monday.¹

Christianity’s Moral Influence. It has been often argued that the history of the Church hardly supports the equation of Christianity and moral progress. The disintegration of the Roman civilization, the almost constant warfare of the Ages of Faith, the disastrous military adventure of the Crusades when the Cross was hurled against the Crescent, the massacre of the Albigenses, the

¹ Herbert Spencer, *The Study of Sociology*, ch. 8.

long-drawn-out horror of the Inquisition, the religious wars of the Reformation and post-Reformation periods, the bloody persecutions of Christian sectaries by other Christian sectaries, the encouragement of the witchcraft mania—John Wesley said that “the giving up witchcraft is, in effect, giving up the Bible”—and finally, the conflict between Religion and Science resulting from the suppression of free inquiry by the Church as long as it had the power to do so—all these taken together make a grim commentary on the claim sometimes put forward on behalf of Christianity, that it stands for and represents all that is highest and best in the life of man.

Yet when this has been said, something more should be added. And let it be said not by a professional apologist, not by a theologian or an ecclesiastic, but by one of the most eminent of Rationalist historians.

“The Platonist,” wrote W. E. H. Lecky, “exhorted men to imitate God; the Stoic, to follow reason; the Christian, to the love of Christ. . . . It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue but the strongest incentive to its practice; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists. This has indeed been the well-spring of whatever is best and purest in the Christian life. Amid all the sins and failings, amid all the priestcraft and persecution and fanaticism that have defaced the Church, it has preserved, in the character and example of its Founder, an enduring principle of regeneration.”¹

* * *

Note.—In the current Whitaker's Almanack the number of Christians in the world to-day is estimated at 692,400,000. But this figure will hardly bear examination, since it represents practically the whole white population, including the Russians, who are largely a nation of atheists, and the Germans, some at least of whom have boasted of their reversion to paganism. All the same, the last hundred and fifty years have seen unexampled missionary activity; and it is stated that there are nearly seven million Christians in India and Burma, three million in China, nine million in the Philippines, over a million in British West Africa and rather more in East Africa, and two million native Christians in South Africa. And just before the World War there were some 600,000 Japanese Christians, whose historical centre was Nagasaki, the city that in the last days of the War was made the target of the second atomic bomb.

¹ W. E. H. Lecky, *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne* (Longmans, Green), vol. ii, p. 8.

CHAPTER XII

MOHAMMEDANISM

THERE are some three hundred million Mohammedans, or Muslims, in the world to-day. More than half of them are Asiatics (in Arabia, Palestine, Turkey, Persia, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Soviet Asia, the Malay States, the East Indies, and China), and more than a quarter are Africans (occupying the whole of North Africa from Morocco to Egypt, and the rest of the continent to considerably south of the equator). The remainder are to be found in Europe—chiefly in Bosnia and the little corner of Turkish territory about Istanbul (Constantinople) that is all that is left of the once extensive European dominions of the Sultan—and in odd corners of America, Australia, and Oceania. Not many of the white races profess Mohammedanism: Christianity is the white man's religion. Muslims, as a rule, have brown skins or black. Yet the greatest Mohammedan power in the world to-day is the British Commonwealth and Empire, since in India over ninety millions of our fellow-citizens are Muslims, and there are millions more in the African colonies.

One in fifteen of the human race is a Muslim, and the proportion seems likely to grow. For Mohammedanism, like Christianity, is a missionary religion; and in some parts of the world, notably among the pagan tribes of Africa, it is striding ahead with a rapidity which the Christian missionaries are unable to check or to rival. To the primitive peoples of the world's backwaters Mohammedanism, so simple in its theology, so well suited in its commands to the climatic conditions of the Heat Belt, appeals with particular force. Mohammedanism is indeed Christianity's only serious competitor for the religious allegiance of modern men.

Although Mohammedans refer to their religion as Islam, the infinitive of an Arabic verb meaning "to submit entirely to the will of Allah," and call themselves Muslim or Moslem—the participle of the same verb meaning those who have so submitted themselves to the complete exclusion of any other object of worship—Mohammedanism is still the term in most popular use in the world at large. Just as Christianity com-

memorates its Founder, so Mohammedanism is above all things the religion of Mohammed.

Mohammed the Man. This remarkable man—his name is more properly spelt Muhammad, and Muslims usually append P.B.G., standing for "Peace and Blessings of God be upon him"—was born at Mecca, in Arabia, about A.D. 570, and died at Medina, in the same country, some 250 miles to the north, on June 6, 632.

At the time of his birth Arabia was a land far removed from the main stream of political and commercial life. "Arabian society," H. A. L. Fisher has written, "was still in the tribal stage, and the hawk-eyed Bedouin tribes might be confidently expected to rob and massacre each other till the crack of doom. Nowhere was there a vestige of an Arabian state, of a regular army, or of a common political ambition. The Arabs were poets, dreamers, fighters, traders; they were not politicians. Nor had they found in religion a stabilizing or unifying power. They practised a low form of polytheism, so low that some finer minds among them, touched perhaps by vague influences from Christianity or Judaism, had begun quietly to challenge it. At Mecca, their principal trading town, only fifty miles removed from the great highway of the Red Sea, they appeared to worship a black stone placed in a temple, called the Caba, or Cube. . . . A hundred years later these obscure savages had achieved for themselves a great world power."¹

The man who worked this astonishing transformation was born, as we have said, in Mecca. His father died shortly after or just before his birth; and at six years of age he lost his mother also. But he belonged to a numerous and influential clan in his native city, and several of his near relations lived to play an important part in his career. He was brought up by his uncle Abu Talib, his father's brother, who instructed him in the business of a merchant, took him with him on a business trip to Syria, and obtained for him a post in the service of Khadijah, a well-to-do widow. Here he conducted himself so well that the widow offered him her hand in marriage.

The matter was promptly arranged, although the lady was fifteen years older than her spouse, and at a stroke Mohammed became a man of wealth and position. By Khadijah, in spite of the disparity in age, he became the father of a considerable family, and for some years he devoted himself to the management of his business enterprises. In pursuit of his calling he had to make caravan

¹ *History of Europe*, p. 137.

journeys across the desert to the adjoining cities and countries; and it may be presumed that from time to time he came into contact with Jews and Christians, and learnt from them something of their beliefs and customs.

At what time and age he began to see himself in the role of apostle and prophet we do not know, but he was a man of middle age, about forty, when he received his first "divine revelation" in the solitude of the mountains near Mecca. Long periods of fasting from food and drink, days of ecstatic contemplation and nights of vigil in the great open spaces of the desert and the gloomy recesses of the mountain caves, combined to convince him that he had been chosen by the one indivisible, all-powerful, and all-merciful God as the last and greatest of His prophets.

Naturally enough it was to his wife that Mohammed first revealed his conviction, and Khadijah heard with joy and pride that the archangel Gabriel had appeared to him in person and commissioned him as the messenger of Allah. A cousin was the next convert, and he was followed by the members of his household. Abu Talib hesitated, but his son Ali eagerly declared his belief. But the most important convert was one Abu Bekr, a man of great authority in the tribe and city to which Mohammed belonged, and destined to become his father-in-law and his first successor.

For several years the work of conversion to the belief in Mohammed's mission went slowly on. Occasionally the Prophet was oppressed by painful doubts as to the reality of the visions he had experienced and the authenticity of the messages he had received; while to a man of his fiery disposition it must have been galling in the extreme to be called, as he was called by many even of his friends, a fool, a dreamer, a liar, a mad poet. More than once he was on the point of committing suicide, as he experienced for himself the truth of the saying attributed to Jesus, that a prophet is not without honour save in his own country. Yet he went on with his work; and when his uncle begged him to desist from the attempt to turn the Meccans from their idolatrous worship and inhumane practices (such as the exposure of infant girls) he returned an emphatic negative. He told Abu Talib "that if they set the sun against him on his right hand and the moon on his left, he would not abandon his enterprise"; and the old man, seeing him so firmly resolved, attempted no further persuasion. "Go in peace, son of my brother," he said, "and say what thou wilt, for by God I will on no account abandon thee."

After four years Mohammed could count on about forty disciples, mostly belonging to the lower ranks in society, and he felt himself justified in making public declaration of his faith and at the same time denouncing the superstitions of his fellow townsmen. As yet he probably had no very exalted idea of his mission: he saw himself as a reformer rather than as the founder of a new religion. But the Meccans were not at all keen on reform. The worship of the Kaaba (the more usual spelling) and the idols it contained was a powerful vested interest, since it attracted to the city large numbers of pilgrims with money to spend on the goods exposed for sale in the bazaars, and on wine and women. Thus it was that the people as a whole displayed the bitterest antagonism to Mohammed, ridiculing his pretensions and pouring scorn on his sternly monotheistic doctrine. So violent was their attitude that for a time Mohammed was forced to leave the city, and Abu Talib found him a place of quiet refuge in the country. After two or three years a truce between the Prophet and his enemies was patched up, and he returned to Mecca. But now it was that the ever-faithful Khadijah died, and shortly afterwards she was followed to the grave by Abu Talib. Mohammed's economic circumstances, too, took a turn for the worse, and from being rich he found himself reduced to something not far removed from poverty.

Yet he presented a bold face to misfortune, and even invited further contumely and opposition by giving out that he had been spirited away one night to Jerusalem, on the back of a fabled horse, and thence to heaven, where he had had intimate converse with God. The heathen rage rose to a fresh height, and it might well have been expected that the Prophet's career would shortly be terminated by stoning or a dagger-thrust. But a turning-point was at hand. In this same year, the twelfth year of his mission, Mohammed received a party of twelve pilgrims from the city of Yathreb (soon to be known to history as Medina) who took an oath on a hill outside Mecca "that they should renounce all idolatry; that they should not steal, nor commit fornication, nor kill their children (as the pagan Arabs were wont to do when they apprehended they should not be able to maintain them), nor forge calumnies: and that they should obey the Prophet in all things that were reasonable."

The next year a larger body of disciples came to see Mohammed from Yathreb, and their enthusiasm and willing helpfulness convinced him that in the northern city he would find a friendly welcome and a much more congenial home than in a Mecca

dominated by his opponents. About June, in A.D. 622, he made his fateful decision and slipped away to Yathreb, henceforth called *Medinat Alnabi* ("the City of the Prophet") or *Medina* ("City"). In this event, known as the *Hegira*, the Mohammedan chronology had its beginning.

Mohammed was now among friends. Converts increased day by day, and soon the man who had been despised in Mecca as a dangerous visionary was the ruler of the rival city and the leader of two powerful tribes. When he felt himself strong enough he declared war on the Meccans, and easily defeated them. A campaign against Jewish settlements in the peninsula was equally successful, and those who had received him not long before with jibes and jeers were compelled to seek his alliance.

For ten years Mohammed lived and ruled in Medina, and every year that passed saw fresh accessions of strength. The tribesfolk in the adjoining deserts were brought into subjection, and at last Mecca was finally conquered. Before his death the whole of the Arabian peninsula acknowledged his spiritual and temporal supremacy, and his missionaries had gone out into all the adjacent lands. The Persian king received a letter from Mohammed inviting him to embrace the religion of Allah. He treated it with great disdain; but the emperor in Constantinople, who received a similar invitation, was more courteous. As for the governor of Egypt, he gave a very favourable reception to Mohammed's messenger, and bade him take back to his master two beautiful Egyptian girls. One of the pair, we are told, Mary by name, became a great favourite of the Prophet when she was added to his harem.

In the year 632 Mohammed was making preparations for a campaign against the Syrians, who had rejected his advances, when he was seized with a fever. His long-sustained and strenuous exertions, the periods of intense excitement, the death of his little boy Ibrahim, and the effects of a poison that had been introduced into a dish of meat some time previously, combined to weaken his frame. He became aware that his end was approaching; and, proceeding to the mosque, he addressed his people for the last time, exhorting them, as he had done so often before, to righteousness and piety and peace among themselves. Each man, he declared, must work out his own salvation. He listened to passages from the *Koran*—the book which, as we shall see, was his greatest gift to the world, asked forgiveness of any he had wronged, appointed his successors, and prepared his weeping attendants for his death.

Then, with his head pillowed on the bosom of Ayesha, his favourite wife, his lips murmuring anticipations of the joys of paradise, Allah's Prophet went to his rest.

In earlier days it was the custom of Christian writers to paint Mohammed's character in the darkest colours. Mohammedan authors, on the other hand, have written at great length and in the most glowing terms of his religious and moral virtues. In particular his charity was such that he seldom had any money in his house, and he frequently distributed his own provisions to supply the necessities of the poor.

For a modern non-Muslim evaluation we have Mr. H. A. L. Fisher's. "Muhammad," he writes, "was one of those men of whom religious history offers many examples, in whom a passionate animal nature is combined with the temper of a visionary. In many of the conventional virtues of Western society he was wholly deficient. He was cruel and crafty, lustful and ignorant, lacking in physical courage and the gift of self-criticism; but despite these grave faults, which became intensified with age and success, he had the ardour of the mystic, the zeal of the ethical reformer, and that absorbing preoccupation with the things of the soul which comes most easily to men in the solitary places of the world." ¹

The Koran. We turn from the man to his book—to the Koran (more correctly, Quran), a word derived from the Arabic for "the reading" or "that which ought to be read." And read indeed it is, and has been read daily, for thirteen hundred years. To this day it is the Bible of the Muslims, their law-book, their manual of instruction in the living of the good life. Carlyle called it "a wearisome confused jumble," but at the same time "the confused ferment of a great rude human soul." Its primary character he summed up as "its genuineness, its being a *bona-fide* book."

Mohammed could neither read nor write. Thus the Koran was not penned by him; and though its 114 suras (or chapters) were taken down by scribes at his dictation over a period of twenty-three years, orthodox Muslims believe that all but a very few of the utterances came not from Mohammed, but from Allah himself. Indeed, the original text is written on a gigantic tablet reposing by the throne of the Almighty; and it was transmitted to the Prophet by a number of readers, including angels, the archangel Gabriel, the Holy Spirit, and God Himself. Since then it has not been altered by a single letter or even by a diacritical point. Actually

the suras were recorded on flat stones, pieces of leather, bones, palm-leaves, and so on, as they fell from Mohammed's lips, and these records were placed higgledy-piggledy in any receptacle that happened to be available. Only when the Prophet was dead did his successor, Abu Bekr, set about the collection of the written matter to form one volume. And the suras, as they are printed in the Koran as we have it, were not uttered in the order in which they are arranged. The shortest suras were probably the first to be declared.

The Making of a Muslim. Muslims are not born, but made. There are three tests, Professor Margoliouth explains: a physical test, an oral test, and a practical test to be found in the performance of certain obligations.¹

The physical test is circumcision. This rite is held by Mohammedans to be a divine institution dating from very ancient times and confirmed by the religion of Islam. Mohammed was well acquainted with it—although the Islamic doctors have affirmed that the Prophet was born ready circumcised, or without a foreskin—since the rite had been established among the Arabs from time immemorial; he countenanced it, partly no doubt because to do so would be to smooth the path of the convert from paganism, and partly because of its sanitary value in a hot climate. Sometimes boys are circumcised, usually by a barber, when they are only a few days old; sometimes the operation may be postponed to the sixth or eighth or even the eleventh year.

The oral test is short and simple. It consists of nothing more than the saying once in a lifetime, with full understanding and profound conviction of its truth, of the creed: "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is the Prophet [or Apostle] of Allah." These two articles of belief are fundamental to Islam and are sufficient in themselves for salvation, but they are accompanied by a number of other dogmas.

Next to the belief in Allah—who, like the Christian God, is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, but, unlike Him, "begetteth not, nor is He begotten"—ranks in importance the belief in the existence of angels, of whom a great number are supposed to exist, ranging from the four great archangels—Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, and Uriel—to the pair of guardian angels who are charged with the oversight and protection of every individual soul. The angels are born of fire, are endowed with a kind of incorporeal

¹ Prof. D. S. Margoliouth, *Mohammedanism* (Home University Library), p. 115.

body, and are sexless and immortal; but there is another class of supernatural being, the jinn or genii, some of them good and some evil, who are made of a grosser fabric and are subject to death.

The next belief is in a succession of sacred scriptures revealed by Allah to a line of prophets. Originally there were a hundred and four of these God-given books, but only four have survived—viz., the Pentateuch given to Moses, the Psalms of David, the Gospel revealed to Jesus, and the Koran of Mohammed. Only the last of these is held to have survived in its pristine and completely authoritative and reliable condition.

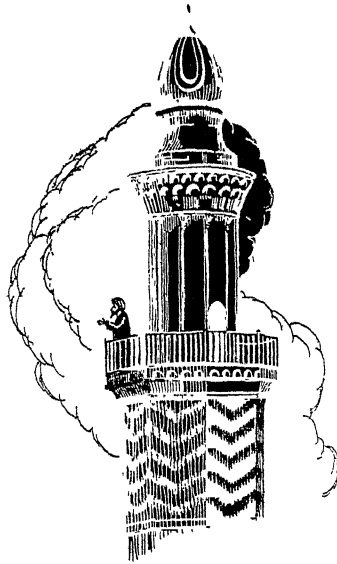
Closely connected with this belief is the belief in a succession of prophets or apostles of Allah. There are said to have been between two and three thousand of these Divine messengers, sent at various times, but six were specially commissioned to proclaim new dispensations, the abrogation of old laws and the promulgation of new ones. These six super-prophets were: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and—latest, greatest, and final prophet of them all—Mohammed.

The next article of faith is the belief in the resurrection, and in the Judgment Day at the end of the world. As we shall see when we come to consider the sanctions of Muslim morality, the heaven and hell of Islam are not spiritual conceptions, but very real and material places. Prophets enter immediately into Paradise at the moment of death, and so do certain other privileged persons, notably soldiers slain in battle in a Holy War; but so far as the great majority of people are concerned, it is not altogether clear what happens to their souls between death and the great and solemn hour when Uriel sounds the trumpet on the last day, when heaven and earth will meet, and in a great procession, headed by Mohammed, there will pass before the judgment-seat of Allah angels, genii, men, and animals. Those who are discovered to be righteous will be shepherded through the gates of Paradise; those whose record is evil will be thrust into hell. Not all of the damned will remain there for all eternity, however, but only unbelievers and idolaters; Muslims and believers in the unity of God will finally be released and permitted to join the elect.

The last of the theological doctrines is predestination, which has led to the frequent assertion that Muslims are fatalists. Certainly they believe that a man's fortunes in this life and in the life to come have been most surely and irrevocably pre-ordained by the Will of Allah. It is a doctrine that has nerved many a Muslim warrior

to play his part right manfully on the battlefield and to meet death with contempt or defiance, but in matters of everyday life it may not be of very great practical importance.

Where did Mohammed obtain the beliefs that have gone to make up the Muslim creed? It seems most likely that he was chiefly indebted to the Jewish sectaries whom he may have met on his business trips. From them he might well have received the doctrine of the unity of Allah; and that he was acquainted with the Jewish scriptures is evidenced by the mention in the Koran of several Old



The Call to Prayer

Testament characters, and of Mary and Jesus (Isa), John and Zacharias, from the pages of the New Testament. Angels may have had a Jewish origin; the jinns probably came from Persia. Arab paganism added its quota to the religious composition in the shape of such ritual performances as the perambulation of the Kaaba.

Now we come to the practical part of Islam. The practical tests demanded of the individual Muslim are four: Prayer (or worship), including those washings or purifications which are its necessary preliminaries: Alms-giving; Fasting; and the Pilgrimage to Mecca.

The importance of prayer in Islam may be seen from Mohammed's declaration that it is the pillar of religion and the key to

paradise. Every Muslim is required to pray five times during the twenty-four hours. The stated times are: in the morning at day-break, about noon, in the afternoon, about sunset, and at nightfall. The prayers mainly consist of passages from the Koran, and are accompanied by certain postures of the body. Preferably they should be said in a mosque, each of which has its tower or towers on which stand the criers, or muezzins, giving the daily calls to worship: "God is most great," "Mohammed is God's Apostle," "Come to prayer, come to security!" But if a mosque is not at hand, then at the hours of prayer the Muslim turns his face towards Mecca and prostrates himself just where he happens to find himself—on the highway or in the desert, or maybe on board ship.

An interesting point to be noted here is that Muslims think, on the one hand, that it is indecent and irreverent to come into God's presence in a slovenly manner; and imagine on the other hand that they ought not to appear before Him in habits too rich or sumptuous, and particularly in clothes adorned with gold or silver, lest they should seem proud. And, as already remarked, the worshipper must put himself as a preliminary in a state of ritual purity.

O true believers, when ye prepare yourselves to pray, wash your faces, and your hands unto the elbows; and rub your heads, and your feet unto the ankles; and if ye be polluted by having lain with a woman, wash yourselves all over. But if ye be sick, or on a journey, or any of you cometh from the privy, or if ye have touched women, and ye find no water, take fine clean sand, and rub your faces and your hands therewith.¹

Although great importance is attached to the discharge of this obligation, the Muslim theologians are most emphatic that it is not the meticulous and punctual performance of the ritual but the inward disposition of the heart that matters most. This indeed is the life and spirit of prayer, as is emphasized in the following passage from the Koran (ch. ii):

It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces in prayer towards the east and the west, but righteousness is of him who believeth in God and the last day, and the angels, and the scriptures, and the prophets; who giveth money for God's sake unto his kindred, and unto orphans, and the needy, and the stranger, and those who ask, and for redemption of captives; who is constant at prayer, and giveth alms; and of those who perform their covenant, when they have covenanted, and who behave themselves patiently in adversity, and hardships, and in time of violence; these are they who are true, and these are they who fear God.

¹ The Koran, ch. 5; trans. by George Sale (c. 1690-1736). I have used this translation throughout as, with its valuable Preliminary Discourse, it is the "classic" version, most easily obtained by the English reader.

There are no set forms of prayer and praise in the Koran, but some suras or chapters are held in very much greater esteem than others. Thus the first chapter, often styled the Opening (Al-Fatihah), or the chapter of prayer or praise, of thanksgiving, etc., is greatly venerated as containing the quintessence of the whole Koran. It is repeated in private and public devotions in very much the same way as the Lord's Prayer is recited by Christians. It is very short.

Praise be to God, the Lord of all creatures; the most merciful, the King of the day of judgment. Thee do we worship, and of thee do we beg assistance. Direct us in the right way, in the way of those to whom thou hast been gracious—not of those against whom thou art incensed, nor of those who go astray.

Another chapter, even shorter, is the 112th, held in such veneration as to be considered worth a third of the Koran:

Say, God is one God; the eternal God: he begetteth not, neither is he begotten: and there is not any one like unto him.

Next to prayer comes the giving of alms, and in the Koran the two are frequently linked: "Be constant in prayer and give alms." In one of his illuminating little notes Sale tells us that Mohammed is reported to have declared that whoever does not duly pay his legal contribution of alms shall have a serpent twisted about his neck at the resurrection. In former days, in Mohammedan states, there was a distinction drawn between legal alms and voluntary alms; the first being, in effect, taxation for the purposes of government, and the second a matter left to the generosity and the conscience of the individual. To-day taxation is more certain and direct, and almsgiving is almost entirely voluntary; a good Muslim may be expected to give 6d. in the £ of his income for the relief of the poor, the sick, the distressed in body, mind, and estate.

The third of the obligations of religious practice is fasting, which refers not only to (in Sale's homely words) "the restraining the belly and other parts of the body from satisfying their lusts," but "the restraining the ears, eyes, tongue, hands, feet, and other members from sin; and the fasting of the heart from worldly cares, and refraining the thoughts from everything besides God."¹

By the express command of the Koran, Muslims are required to fast one whole month of the year, the month of Ramadan.

O true believers, a fast is ordained you, as it was ordained unto those before you, that ye may fear God. A certain number of days shall ye fast; but he among you who shall be sick, or on a journey, shall fast an

¹ Sale's Koran, Prelim. iv.

equal number of other days. And those who can keep it, and do not, must redeem their neglect by maintaining of a poor man. And he who voluntarily dealeth better with the poor man than he is obliged, this shall be better for him. But if ye fast, it will be better for you, if ye knew it. The month of Ramadan shall ye fast, in which the Koran was sent down from Heaven. . . . (ch. ii).

In addition to the sick and travellers mentioned above, soldiers are exempted in time of war, but they are bound to fast for an equal number of days in other months. Nurses and pregnant women are entirely exempt from fasting.

For the whole month, from the one new moon to the next, Mohammedans, says Sale, "must abstain from eating, drinking, and women, from daybreak till night, or sunset. And this injunction they observe so strictly, that while they fast they suffer nothing to enter their mouths, or other parts of their body, esteeming the fast broken and null if they smell perfumes, take a clyster or injection, bathe, or even purposely swallow their spittle; some being so cautious that they will not open their mouths to speak, lest they should breathe the air too freely; the fast is also deemed void if a man kiss or touch a woman, or if he vomit designedly. But after sunset they are allowed to refresh themselves, and to eat and drink, and enjoy the company of their wives until daybreak"—or as the Koran itself puts it, "until ye can distinguish a white thread from a black."

In support of the practice of fasting, it is urged that it is conducive of understanding by the rich man of the poor man's lot, encourages hardiness and resolution, and teaches men to avoid becoming slaves to their wants—besides offering plenty of opportunity for prayer and worship.

Finally, the Mohammedan is required to make at least once in his lifetime the pilgrimage to Mecca, the birthplace of the Prophet; if the journey be extended to his tomb at Medina, so much the better for the pilgrim's eternal welfare. The pilgrimage is enjoined by the Koran and supported by Mohammed's personal command; but there is a saving clause, that it is dependent on ability. Railways, steamships, motor-cars, and even aeroplanes, are used nowadays to swell the pilgrim host which during the Month of Pilgrimage converges annually on the Arabian peninsula; but poverty prevents many Muslims from performing the blessed journey. It has been calculated that if every Mohammedan went to Mecca once in his lifetime, the holy city would have to open its gates to six million pilgrims a year. The actual figure is very much less, and to millions the pilgrimage must remain something that one would very much

like to do if only one had the time and the means. Moreover, the fact that to be a *hajj*, a man who has made the journey, is to be a person of some distinction, is further proof that by no means every Muslim has seen the carpeted shape of the Kaaba, run and walked round it seven times, kissed the Sacred Stone (believed by prosaic Westerners to be a meteorite) that is inserted in its south-east corner, and then spent a day in devotion on Mount Arafat.

So much for the tests of the Muslim. But one more of Islam's positive ordinances may be mentioned: the requirement to observe Friday as a weekly day of rest. This particular day of the week was chosen because on it the people, for centuries long before Mohammed's advent, had been accustomed to hold their civil and religious assemblies.

Islam's Negatives. The negative commandments of Mohammedanism are as simple and precise as the positive precepts. There is little in them that can be claimed to be original.

Wilful murder is sternly condemned in the Koran.

It is not lawful for a believer to kill a believer unless it happens by mistake, and whoso killeth a believer by mistake, the penalty shall be the freeing of a believer from slavery, and a fine to be paid to the family of the deceased, unless they remit it as alms. And if the slain person be of a people at enmity with you, and be a true believer, the penalty shall be the freeing of a believer. . . . But whoso killeth a believer designedly, his reward shall be hell; he shall remain therein for ever; and God shall be angry with him, and shall curse him, and shall prepare for him a great punishment (ch. iv).

In Islam, as in ancient Judaism, the law of retaliation runs: "The free shall die for the free, and the servant for the servant, and a woman for a woman" (ch. ii). But this is not strictly observed, since a man is to be put to death for the murder of a woman, but a Muslim, even though a slave, is not to die for having slain an infidel or non-Muslim, even though he be a freeman.

One particular class of murder was singled out by the Prophet for the fiercest denunciation—the exposure of girl infants, often by burying them alive up to the neck in the desert sand. At the last day, the great day of judgment, thunders Mohammed, "the girl who hath been buried alive shall be asked for what crime she was put to death. . . ."

Perhaps it should be added that this practice of girl-murder was not a peculiarity of the pre-Mohammed Arabs. Traces of it are to be found in ancient Egypt and in classical Greece, and it is frequently encountered in present-day China. And in every case

the reason is the same; it is not moral depravity but economic necessity that makes it imperative that in a world of want only those infants shall be preserved who may contribute by their labour to the preservation of the life of the tribe or community.

Theft is sternly punished. "If a man or woman steal, cut off their hands," runs one precept, "in retribution for that which they have committed: this is an exemplary punishment appointed by God, and God is mighty and wise." For the first offence the right hand was cut off, for a second the left foot; for a third offence the crime was punishable by the loss of the left hand, and for the fourth by that of the right foot. And if the man still persisted in his evil courses, then he was to be scourged at the discretion of the judge. Sale remarks, pertinently enough, that this compares unfavourably with the law of Justinian, the great Christian law-giver or codifier, that a thief is not to be maimed, since stealing is usually the result of indigence, and to cut off a thief's hand is to deprive him of the means of getting his livelihood in an honest fashion. But Muslim legists have ruled that this extreme penalty of mutilation is to be imposed only when the thing stolen is of a certain value; and the heinousness of the crime is diminished if the goods stolen were readily accessible to the thief, or if he were driven into crime by hunger, of himself or of those dependent upon him. In modern lands where the law of Islam prevails, the mutilation has long since been superseded by imprisonment, hard labour, the bastinado (caning on the soles of the feet), or a sound cudgelling. Even in early times, it may be supposed that mutilation was not always or even generally inflicted. Men are often more merciful, fortunately, than their laws.

Coming now to sexual offences, adultery was punishable by stoning, according to a text in the Koran that is now lost; its place, however, is taken by passages in the Sonna, or Traditions of the Muslim commentators, who are held in the highest esteem.

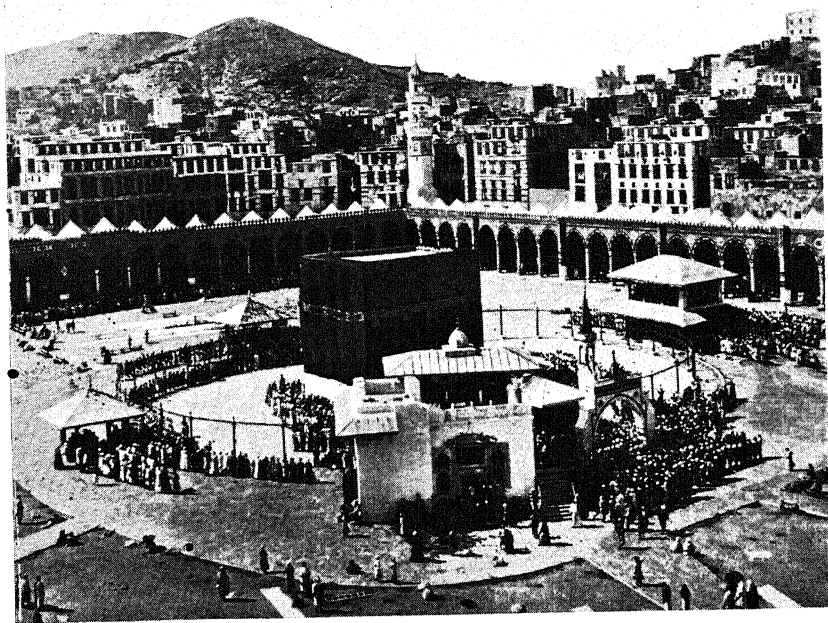
In the laws of the Koran, as in those of Moses, there is a very commendable attempt at curbing the tongue of the scandalmonger. "Those who accuse women of reputation [that is, women of ripe age and perfect understanding, and Mohammedan in religion] of whoredom, and produce not four witnesses of the fact, scourge them with fourscore stripes, and receive not their testimony for ever, for such are infamous prevaricators." A husband who accuses his wife of adultery, and has no witnesses of the fact besides himself, is required to take a most solemn oath, to "swear four times by God that he

speaketh the truth, and the fifth time that he imprecate the curse of God on him if he be a liar. And it shall avert the punishment from the wife if she swear four times by God that he [the husband] is a liar, and if the fifth time she imprecate the wrath of God on her, if he speaketh the truth " (ch. xxiv).

Mohammed was induced, or at least encouraged, to pronounce this humane and reasonable decree by an episode in which Ayesha, the favourite wife of his later years, was involved. The Prophet had undertaken an expedition against a hostile tribe, and Ayesha accompanied him into the field. On their return, when they were marching by night on the road to Medina, Ayesha, "alighted from her camel, and stepped aside on a private occasion; but, on her return, perceiving she had dropped her necklace . . . she went back to look for it: and in the meantime her attendants, taking it for granted that she was got into her pavilion (or little tent surrounded with curtains, wherein women are carried in the east) set it again on the camel, and led it away. When she came back to the road, and saw her camel was gone, she sat down there, expecting that when she was missed some would be sent back to fetch her, and in a little time she fell asleep. Early in the morning Safwan Ebn al Moattel, who had stayed behind to rest himself, coming by, and perceiving somebody asleep, went to see who it was, and knew her to be Ayesha; upon which he waked her, by twice pronouncing with a low voice these words, 'We are God's, and unto Him must we return.' Then Ayesha immediately covered herself with her veil; and Safwan set her on his own camel, and led her after the army, which they overtook by noon, as they were resting." This accident had like to have ruined Ayesha, Sale goes on, for her reputation was publicly called in question as if she had been guilty of misconduct with Safwan. Mohammed himself was deeply perplexed, not knowing what to think, when he reflected on the circumstances of the affair, which were improved by some malicious persons very much to Ayesha's disadvantage. Notwithstanding his wife's protestations of innocence, he could not get rid of his perplexity, nor stop the mouths of the censorious, for about a month, when the passage quoted above from the Koran was revealed unto him.¹

Fornication is forbidden in the Koran: "the whore and the whoremonger shall ye scourge with an hundred stripes. And let not compassion towards them prevent you from executing the judgment of God, if ye believe in God and the last day. . . ."

¹ Sale's Koran, ch. xxiv, note.



TO MECCA EVERY MUSLIM TURNS

In the colonnaded courtyard of the great mosque at Mecca stands the Kaaba, draped with the black carpet sent from Cairo. Top, a Muslim judge, dispensing justice in the desert. The plaintiff and defendant are seated at his feet; and forming the circle are witnesses and friends of the litigants.

A year's exile may be imposed in addition. But if the culprit be a slave woman, then, because she is presumed not to have had so good an upbringing as her mistress, she is to receive only half the punishment laid down, i.e. she may be given fifty stripes and be banished for six months. Even if she be accused of adultery she cannot be stoned, however, for the very good reason that stoning is not a punishment that can be inflicted by halves.

Mohammedans are forbidden in more than one passage of the Koran to drink wine or other intoxicating liquor. The injunction is by no means generally observed, particularly in those Muslim countries which have been brought within the sphere of Western influence. Sale remarks that the Persians as well as the Turks are very fond of wine; and if they are asked how they venture to drink it when their religion so directly forbids it, then they answer, "that it is with them as with the Christians, whose religion prohibits drunkenness and whoredom as great sins, and who glory, notwithstanding, some in debauching girls and married women, and others in drinking to excess." Yet the great majority of the faithful are total abstainers, and some even go so far as to extend the ban to coffee, since its fumes have some effect on the imagination. Opium and other narcotics are forbidden, and a pipe of tobacco has not always escaped condemnation.

All games of chance are prohibited to Muslims. Drinking and betting are condemned together. "O true believers," runs one passage in the Koran, "surely wine, and lots, and images, and divining arrows, are an abomination of the work of Satan; therefore avoid them, that ye may prosper." By "lots" is meant all games of chance, and "drink" covers all inebriating liquor; the "images" referred to are believed to be not idols but the chessmen used by the pagan Arabs—little figures of men, elephants, horses, and dromedaries, which led to Mohammed's dislike of the game; while as for the "arrows," these were arrows of a special kind kept in the temple of the pagan gods and used in divination by the priests. They were in sets of three: to draw the first meant divine approbation of a proposed enterprise; to draw the second, disapprobation; while the third was non-committal, being a blank. Mohammed unreservedly condemned this practice of arrow-divining as being superstitious and unworthy of believers of Allah. Some commentators have gone so far as to assert that not only divination, but also games into which chance enters, e.g. dice and cards, are forbidden to the strict believer. In spite of the Prophet's frown,

chess was approved, since it is a game of skill; but some purists have been known to play with plain pieces of wood.

The Good Muslim. What sort of a man is held up to praise in the Koran? We have him portrayed in the following sentences from Sura xvii, supposed, like the great majority of the passages in the sacred book, to have been dictated to the Prophet by Allah himself or by an angel as Allah's immediate mouthpiece.

Set not up another god with the true God. . . . Thy Lord hath commanded that ye worship none, besides him; and that ye show kindness unto your parents. Say not unto them, "Fie on you!" neither reproach them, but speak respectfully unto them; and submit to behave humbly towards them, out of tender affection, and say, "O Lord, have mercy on them both, as they nursed me when I was little. . . ."

And give unto him who is of kin to you his due, and also unto the poor, and the traveller. And waste not thy substance profusely. . . . And let not thy hand be tied up to thy neck; neither open it with an unbounded expansion, lest thou become worthy of reprehension, and be reduced to poverty. . . .

Kill not your children for fear of being brought to want; we will provide for them and for you; verily the killing them is a great sin.

Draw not near unto fornication, for it is wickedness and an evil way.

Neither slay the soul which God hath forbidden you to slay, unless for a just cause; and whosoever shall be slain unjustly, we have given his heir power to demand satisfaction. But let him not exceed the bounds of moderation in putting to death the murderer in too cruel a manner, or by revenging his friend's blood on any other person than the person who killed him. . . .

And meddle not with the substance of the orphan, unless it be to improve it. . . . And give full measure, when you measure aught, and weigh with a just balance. . . .

Walk not proudly in the land, for thou canst not cleave the earth, neither shalt thou equal the mountains in stature. All this is evil, and abominable in the sight of the Lord.

Rewards and Punishments. The sanctions of Mohammedan morality consist of the prospect of a very realistically real heaven or hell, although according to the theological theory it is not a man's good works or his individual merits that secure admission to the joys of Paradise, but solely God's mercy. Those who have been chosen are destined to dwell for ever in gardens of delight. They repose on couches adorned with gold and precious stones; and though they are served continually by handsome youths with cups of wine, "their heads shall not ache by drinking the same, neither shall their reason be disturbed." Choice fruits and the flesh of exotic birds are theirs for the asking; and they shall have as their companions "fair damsels having large black eyes, resembling

pearls hidden in their shells"—damsels of very special creation, who never grow old, but are always of the same age as their husbands. Moreover, as Sale explains in a note, "how often so ever their husbands shall go in unto them, they shall always find them virgins."¹

But unbelievers and the wicked shall go to a hell indeed, where "garments of fire shall be fitted unto them; boiling water shall be poured on their heads; their bowels shall be dissolved thereby and also their skins; and they shall be beaten with maces of iron."²

Many passages might be quoted from the Koran in evidence of the lofty morality of Islam, but it has to be admitted that there is a tendency to limit philanthropy to the Islamic brotherhood (which in fairness may be said to include those who until recently were slaves or very little more), and there are other drawbacks of a yet more serious character. These may be considered under four heads, viz. the position of women; slavery; religious intolerance; and social, economic, and political stagnation.

Position of Women. That "vulgar imputation," as Sale calls it, that the Mohammedans are supposed to hold that "women have no souls" and, when they die, perish like brute beasts and have no reward in the joys of the next life, is easily disproved. In the first place Mohammed had obviously a very great respect for women—was not his first disciple a woman, his first and at that time his only wife?—and in the second, there are passages in the Koran which definitely affirm that women have their reward in the next life for what they do in this. "Whoso doth good works, whether he be male or female, and is a true believer, they shall be admitted into paradise," runs one passage; and there are other verses that prove beyond a doubt that the God of Islam makes no distinction of sexes. Moreover, women are required to observe the ceremonies of religion, including the pilgrimage to Mecca, so far as the disabilities of their sex allow. As likely as not, the very general belief that women will not be admitted to the same heaven as men is due to ecstatic descriptions of the houris, or "paradisiacal females" as Sale calls them, who are specially created to minister to male believers in the Muslim heaven.

Some commentators assert that men in the next world will have the company of the wives they have had in this, or at least those of them as they still desire; but on the whole the orthodox belief would seem to be that women have indeed souls to be saved or lost, that they too may enjoy eternal bliss or suffer eternal damna-

¹ *Koran*, ch. lvi.

² *Ibid.*, ch. xxii.

tion, but that their heaven is a separate place of happiness. There they will enjoy all sorts of delights; "but whether," Sale is curious enough to remark, "one of these delights will be the enjoyment of agreeable paramours created for them, to complete the economy of the Mohammedan system, is what I have nowhere found decided."

One circumstance, however, is clear enough. The Prophet was once badgered by an old woman to intercede with Allah so that she might be sure of admittance to Paradise. There are no old women there, Mohammed rejoined; and then, to dry the old woman's tears and stifle her complaints at such unfairness, he explained that there are no old women in heaven since God makes all who obtain entrance there young again.

But if women have an equal right with men to enter heaven—and more than an equal probability that they will go to the other place, since the majority of the inhabitants of hell are said to be women—they are far from enjoying equal status in this. Polygamy makes for female subjection, and polygamy is allowed by the Koran in the most unequivocal terms. "Take in marriage of the women who please you two, three, or four; but if ye fear that ye cannot act equitably towards so many, marry one only, or the slaves which ye shall have acquired"—which seems to mean, that a man may have four wives at most; but if his economic circumstances do not permit him to maintain more than one wife, then he shall marry only one, and for the rest may make up the number with slave girls as concubines, since these do not require so large a maintenance, so expensive and elaborate a wardrobe, as the free woman.

Muslim opinion sanctions the taking of a second wife in such cases as when the first wife is barren, or afflicted with an incurable disease, or is a lunatic. To divorce a woman in such circumstances would be regarded as a shame and disgrace. A woman may also be taken into the harem who has become without means of support.

Here it may be noted that the Prophet himself was not bound by a limitation that he probably learnt from the Jews. He gave out that he had been granted special privileges: he might take as many wives and concubines as he pleased, and no man might marry any woman who had once been in the Prophet's harem.

If a Muslim may marry four wives, he usually confines himself in practice to one, or at most two—as indeed he is advised to do by his religious guides. In Turkey in particular, even, before the reforms of Kemal Ataturk, one wife was becoming the general rule, and probably to have more than one is nowadays quite exceptional.

But it should be remembered that Turkey is hardly a typical Muslim country; and among the Turks the position of woman—unveiled as she is, and capable of entering the professions and sharing openly in business and social life—is far higher than it is in the other lands of the Near East where the Koran is still held in the utmost reverence as the word of Allah.

In these lands the old customs prevail, and have the backing of nationalist conservatism. In the Arabia of Ibn Saud, as in the Arabia of Mohammed, a wife can be divorced—put away, in the Biblical phrase—with the greatest of ease. A man who has tired of his wife has only to say “Thou art divorced,” or “I divorce thee,” and return part of her dowry, and she has no alternative but to return to her father. Both the man and the woman are immediately at liberty to marry again. The same woman may be divorced, remarried to the same man without actually leaving his tent or house, and divorced again. But Mohammed decreed that if the man divorced her a third time, then he could not take her back into his harem until, in Sale’s racy phrase, “she had been first married and bedded by another, and divorced by such second husband.” This was in order to put a check on a husband’s too ready resort to divorce.

To obtain a divorce a man has only to feel a dislike for his wife. The wife, on the other hand, to obtain a divorce on her own account, must advance more solid reasons—ill usage, want of proper maintenance, neglect of conjugal duty, impotency, and so on; furthermore, she will have to sacrifice part, if not the whole, of the dowry that she brought with her to her husband.

Beyond a doubt, the women in a Mohammedan society are legally and socially the inferiors of men. “Women ought to behave towards their husbands in like manner as their husbands should behave towards them,” runs a text in the Koran, “but the men ought to have a superiority over them.” They are looked down upon as hopelessly inferior in intellect—which may well be the case, since their education is of the slightest and they are married at puberty; and that chivalry which in the West has done so much to soften the woman’s lot is almost entirely lacking in the Orient. To a Muslim, marriage is an institution ordained for the perpetuation of the race: he looks on his wife as the mother of his sons—he is sorely grieved if she produces only daughters—and on his concubines as the charming practitioners of the arts of love. Woman is his wife or mistress, but never, or hardly ever, his companion and his equal.

Slavery. In the Koran, as in the Old Testament, slavery is regarded as part of the natural order of things, and this although, according to the Islamic theology, all believers are equal in the sight of Allah. Some commentators have argued that no Muslim, and even no Arab, whether a believer or not, could be enslaved, and certainly these living chattels were mostly obtained from other races. The Koran encourages their manumission, and many crimes and misdeeds may be expiated in this way. A slave girl who becomes the mother of a child acknowledged by her master to be his, cannot be sold or given away, and she may claim her freedom at his death; and a man who wishes to marry a slave girl must first set her free.

Slavery was not legally abolished in Turkey until 1876, in Egypt until 1882, and in Afghanistan until 1895: in Zanzibar and Russian Central Asia it continued later, and even to this day Arab slavers raid the villages of the Sudan to obtain captives for the slave marts of Arabia, where slavery is still an institution. But in fairness it must be stated that there is little or no feeling of colour antagonism among Muslims: there is none of the belief still so frequently found in the American South, and elsewhere, that the black man belongs to a lower order of creation and should not be permitted to aspire to, still less to become, anything higher in the social scale than the twentieth-century equivalent of the hewer of stone and drawer of water. *

Throughout by far the greater part of the Mohammedan world slavery no longer exists. Arabia is its last stronghold; and even here, among the half-barbaric Bedouin, it is something very different from the institution denounced by the professional agitators and religious proselytizers. Slaves actually enjoy certain fortuitous social advantages, says Mr. Bertram Thomas.

The male, for instance, escapes the perils of the blood feuds that haunt the "free" tribesman, and when he is caught in a raid and Arab kills Arab, his life will be spared. It is true he will find himself taken captive and sold to a fresh master, but his lot need not therefore be worsened. As regards females, the slave girl enjoys a social liberty that is in gratifying contrast to the "free" Arab woman. The latter is probably married at fifteen to a spouse chosen by her father, without being consulted or even seeing him. Thereafter she is destined to close confinement in her house for the rest of her life except for rare excursions out of doors, where she goes closely veiled. The rigidity of the convention increases as her position rises in the social scale, while any sexual lapse—this in contrast to her husband's admitted licence—she will pay for with her life. The slave girl, on the other hand, is fancy free, and although her

marriage will be likewise arranged by her master with an eye only to his own profit, she will walk abroad unveiled throughout her life, and flirt and fraternise where she will.¹

Religious Intolerance. Warring against the infidel is commanded by several passages in the Koran, and moreover has the sanction of the Prophet himself, who conducted more than one campaign against the Arabian idolaters. "Fight for the religion of God; whosoever fighteth for the religion of God, whether he be slain or be victorious, we will surely give him a great reward." As we have seen, he who dies on the battlefield in the cause of Islam is a martyr and goes straight to heaven. He who deserts from the holy war and seeks to save his skin at the expense of his religion is held up to universal execration: he has forfeited his life in this world and in the next. Apostasy is indeed one of the crimes for which capital punishment is decreed by the Islamic code.

For hundreds of years Islam was propagated at the sword's point, and "Allah Akbar," "God is most great," was a potent battle-cry. The tradition of the holy war of Islam against Christianity, that dates from the Crusades, lived on into our own time: the Mahdi and the Khalifa preached it in the Sudan; the Turks endeavoured to use it against us during the First World War, and there were grave disturbances among the Muslims in India as a consequence. But now that Turkey has become modernized we hear little of the holy war that the sultan and caliph had the power to launch; and in the world of Islam, as in Christendom, a decline in religious observance, reflecting a decline in religious belief, tells against the old martial intolerance.

Beyond doubt another factor working in the same direction is the overwhelming military and economic superiority of the Western countries. Against tanks and planes and massed artillery, not to mention atomic bombs, the shock troops of Islam, fanatical and heroic fighters as they have proved themselves to be on so many a field, would stand no chance at all.

Islamic Stagnation. This is the last and not the least of the charges that may be brought against Mohammedanism. Countries which profess the faith of Allah are said to be backward socially, economically, and politically, compared with Christian lands. The Arab principalities in Egypt and North Africa, in Sicily and in Spain, were admittedly highly civilized when the Christian countries to the north were sunk in semi-barbarism; and yet, as the years

¹ *Arabia Felix* (Cape), p. 32.

have passed, Islam has stayed still or gone back, while Christendom has swept ahead to astonishing heights of achievement.

Some thinkers have found the solution to the problem in the belief in *Kismet*, or Fate. The word Islam, it will be remembered, means submission to the will of Allah; and it is easy to understand that resignation might merge into indifference and thus act as a bar to material and moral progress.

But predestination is not an exclusively Islamic doctrine: Calvinism is the Christian version, and never at any time have Calvinists been behindhand in advocating and achieving reforms of one kind or another. It would seem, then, that we must look elsewhere for an explanation of Muslim stagnation; and we may find it, not in fatalism, but in the first place in the physical conditions of those parts of the world which have seen the chief triumphs of Islam—a warm climate is not so stimulating to exertion and invention as a temperate—and secondly, and perhaps to an even greater degree, in the fact that the Koran is still the Bible of the Muslim peoples.

Just as a written constitution has been found in the political sphere to make for conservatism in outlook and rigidity in practice, so a religion that is contained within the covers of a book that is alleged to have been dictated by God Himself, so that it cannot be added to, altered or amended, or detracted from, can hardly fail to make for a stereotyped way of life.

The same can be said of the Bible, of course; if those peoples who hold the Old Testament and the New to be the title-deeds of their faiths were to consider themselves bound by the social code laid down in the Mosaic laws or by the sayings of Jesus, then Jews and Christians might be as unprogressive as the Muslims. The Bible is no longer accepted as a complete and sufficient guide for a life lived in the conditions of the twentieth century in Britain and America. But to the pious Muslims, to the orthodox of Islam, the Koran—which, it may be noted, has a unity and consistency that the Bible altogether lacks—is still the final word, not only in religious doctrine, but in political government, economic arrangements, sexual behaviour, and social life generally. Is it surprising, then, that compared with the Westerner the Muslim is unprogressive, one given to the old ways that are supported by the authority of the sacred book?

All the same, it is possible to exaggerate the “stagnation” that is believed to afflict the Islamic world like some rotting and ulti-

mately fatal disease. In India the very large Muslim community constitutes an element that is both physically vigorous and morally progressive; and Turkey's renaissance has astounded the world. There are other countries that have been Muslim for many hundreds of years and to-day show signs of considerable advance. A case in point is Egypt, which after an age of subordination to outside powers has in our own time recovered its independence.

"Never before did Egypt attain such a measure of prosperity, liberty, and independence as she now possesses," writes Dr. Taha Hussein in "*Islam To-day*."

And therefore never before did she attain the vigour and vitality she enjoys in her mental life to-day. Never before in her long history did Egypt know a period when the law decreed that it was the obligation of the Government to teach her people free up to a fixed standard of education, while the people are themselves legally obliged to send their children of both sexes to the public schools. Never before did Egypt know an era in which all branches of learning were legally open to every citizen who wishes to study them; while the Government is compelled to grant the means of learning to all its people, and not to the rich alone. In every Egyptian village there is now at least one primary school; and in every larger town there is at least one secondary school. In Cairo itself, besides the ancient religious university, the renowned and influential Azhar, there now stands the modern Egyptian University, where the various branches of modern learning are pursued, and where the same modern standards and methods of research have been adopted as the Europeans use in their own universities.¹

Far to the south, in those regions of Central and East Africa which have never been brought within the sphere of civilization until our own day, Islam is making great and rapid progress. Arab traders in the eighteenth century were the pioneer missionaries, but of recent years the appeal of Islam to the pagan tribes in particular has been most marked.

It is often alleged by detractors of Islam, writes William Hichens, in the same symposium, that the many converts Islam wins from the hinterland tribes of East Africa are attracted not by the moral tenets of the faith, but by the outward display of its adherents and by the material advantages they appear to enjoy. But, he goes on, this contention is a singularly pointless one.

It is not to be supposed that the tribal native, steeped in the ancestral lore and animism of his people, can absorb at a glance the moral precepts of Islam or acquire in a day the piety, faith, and conviction of a devout Muslim. But he can and he does observe with his own eyes the "out-

¹ *Islam To-day*, ed. A. J. Arberry and Rom Landau (Faber, 1943), p. 92.

ward" and obvious benefits which Islam bestows upon its followers. He notes the meticulous cleanliness, both in person and clothing, of the Muslim, beside which the goatskins and grease of the tribal dress compare so unfavourably; he notes that the domestic life of the Muslim is superior to his own in the squalor of the village; he notes that the Muslim, albeit, perhaps, one of his own tribe, has acquired an evident but intangible quality, a dignity and sense of personal pride and well-being, an individuality, which life in the tribal beliefs does not evoke. In a word, he perceives that the Muslim has acquired . . . *heshima*. There is no exact English equivalent of this term. It comprises dignity, good breeding, strength of character, piety, honesty, generosity, authority, wisdom, the attributes of personal character, and honour. But whereas in Europe a man's honour is in his own keeping, in Africa a man's *heshima* depends upon the esteem in which he is held in the public view. And this view, in a country where life is lived under public scrutiny, is a critical one. The Muslim values *heshima* above all else, for it is the measure of his character and life. He is thus meticulous not only in his bearing but in those innate courtesies which are conformable with good conduct.¹

Muslim Sects. There are many sects in Mohammedanism just as there are in Christianity, and perhaps the most effective reply that may be made to the charge of stagnation is that some at least of these afford evidence of the stirrings of new life.

The principal division, one that is almost as old as Islam itself, is into Sunnites and Shiites, the former being those who recognize the legitimacy of the Prophet's first three caliphs—Abu Bekr, Omar, and Othman—while the latter maintain that these were usurpers and that Ali, Mohammed's cousin and son-in-law (he was the son of Abu Talib and married Fatima), was his rightful heir and successor. The Sunnites are the orthodox party and by far the more numerous and widespread; the Shiites are chiefly to be found in Persia, where Shiism is the official faith. There are differences of theology and ritual as well as this matter of ancient history. Thus the Shiites are given to allegorizing the Koran; they have their own peculiarities of religious ablutions and prayer postures; and they do not often make the pilgrimage to Mecca, since they have frequently had to complain of ill-usage in Arabia. A sect of extreme Shiites in Yemen maintain that Ali and his legitimate successors were incarnations of Allah, and they also believe in the transmigration of souls.

The Sunnites derive their name from the Sunna, the body of traditionary teaching of the Prophet that they have added to the Koran and is their authoritative text-book in matters of faith and morals. Their reverence of Mohammed falls little short of worship.

¹ *Islam To-day*, p. 129.

What the Prophet said and did is of supreme moment, and the greatest care has been taken to preserve even the most insignificant fragment of his discourse. The first four caliphs—the three mentioned above, and Ali, who succeeded at length in A.D. 656 but was assassinated four years later—are held in highest honour as the “rightly-guided,” since they were all intimate friends of Mohammed. But on Ali’s death there ensued a period of uncertainty, and eventually there arose the four schools or ritual sects founded by great Muslim jurists in the first two centuries of the Mohammedan era. Any and every orthodox Muslim is a member of one or other of the four. To the outsider the differences between the sects seem to be minute and of the slightest consequence, but the Muslim who follows Malik has no difficulty in maintaining his opinions against the disciple of Abu Hanifah or of Shafi’i or of Ahmed Ibn Hanbal. One matter in which they differ is the minor washings which accompany the ritual of prayer. How much of the arms, etc., should be washed? How many rules and practices are there to be observed? Should the name of Allah be pronounced while the ablutions are proceeding? The four schools find it impossible to agree on these and similarly weighty questions.

The self-imposed task of the Islamic jurists whose names we have given was the collection, sifting, and proper arrangement of the traditions of Mohammed and his immediate followers. Hundreds of thousands of these traditions are said to have been passed under review, and those that have survived the careful scrutiny of the Muslim doctors are preserved in the Sunna. This and the Koran together provide the believer with an infallible and unalterable guide to salvation, one which dispenses with further study and research, and makes appeals to conscience and enlightened reason altogether unnecessary.

The Sunnites and the Shiites represent the great historic cleavage of the world of Islam; but there have been, and are, many other sects of considerable size and influence. One of these is the Wahabis, who in our own day have very great political importance since the redoubtable Ibn Saud, king of Arabia, is the Wahabi chief. The sect was founded some two hundred years ago by Mohammed Ibn Abdul Wahab, whose professed aim was the restoration of primitive Mohammedanism. Like his modern representative and descendant, he denounced luxury and magnificence, forbade smoking and card-playing and intoxicating liquor, and insisted on sexual purity and the most regular and rigorous performance of the

duties of prayer, alms-giving, and the rest. Well may the Wahabis deserve to be called the Puritans of Islam.

Another fanatical sect is the Senussi, whose chief centre is the Libyan desert and Cyrenaica. Their founder was a celebrated holy man of Fez, who from 1830 onwards preached throughout North Africa a doctrine of a purified and ascetic Islam. His successor, the second Senussi, fell foul of the French; and the third came into conflict with the British during the Great War. The Italians treated the sectaries very badly; but the confraternity held together, and the Senussi of to-day continues to be a powerful spiritual authority.

Bab and Bahaism. Babi is a modern Persian sect, so called because its founder, Mirza Ali Mohammed (1820-1850), assumed the title Bab-ed-Din ("Gate of the Faith"), when he declared that through him men might commune with the Imam Mahdi, the last of the successors of Ali whom the Persian Shiites recognized. The Imam Mahdi had not died, but disappeared from mortal ken in A.D. 940; and since his continued existence had been confidently believed in, quite a number of religiously-minded persons accepted the Bab's claim. They were confirmed in their belief when a little later the young mystic said he was not merely the "Gate" to the Imam Mahdi, but the Imam himself. But the Persian authorities scented not only heresy but political danger, and the Bab was shot and his disciples massacred.

The sect lived on, however. The Bab had prophesied that a greater than he was to come; and in due course there appeared one Mirza Huseyn Ali (1817-1892), who was given the name of Baha-Ullah ("Splendour of God"). The Babis hailed him as the Messiah, the most complete incarnation of the Son of God; and under his leadership and that of his son, Sir Abdul Baha (1844-1921), the movement, now known as Bahaism, spread rapidly. Many converts were found in Europe and America, for the doctrines of the sect, or religion, are such as to commend themselves to those who are in search of a faith that seeks to comprise the essence of all religions. The Bahais believe in a progressive revelation; they work for universal peace and human brotherhood; their ritual is of the simplest; they are no ascetics, but encourage charity, social service, and mutual tolerance; they discountenance polygamy, concubinage, and divorce, and strive to improve the status of women, whom they regard as men's equal. To-day it is asserted that a fifth of the Persian people are Bahais; and in London and New York, in India,

China, and even Japan, they have numerous converts so that their total membership runs into millions.

Sufism. The Sufis are the mystics of Islam. The name is usually derived from *suf* (wool), in reference to the coarse woollen garments which were worn by the early members of the sect as a symbol of their disregard of earthly pleasures and their renunciation of wealth and luxurious living.

Mysticism, in whatever religion it may be found, is the especial tendency of gentle and dreamy spirits, and it is a woman—one Rabia, who lived in the second century of the Hegira and died in Jerusalem—who is considered to have been the founder of Sufism. There were Sufi saints before there were Sufi seers and missionaries; but very soon the movement had won many hearts in Persia, where it has been most strongly represented ever since.

The secret of Sufism, it may be said, is the identity of the world with God; and to the Sufi, as to the Hindu mystic—and indeed to the mystic wherever he (or she) may be found—salvation means the union of the individual with the Divine. Some of the Persian Sufis have openly identified man with God; but most have been more cautious and orthodox in their language, and have devoted themselves to discovering and describing the method by which the Muslim mystic may attain to something that does not seem to be very different from the Hindu's absorption in Brahma or the Buddhist Nirvana. The method, however, bears little resemblance to the elaborate systems of self-torture which the Indian ascetics have devised; the Sufis have found adequate to their purpose a course of life in which dancing and singing have a place with fasting and celibacy. When the adept has reached and as it were graduated in the final stage, he is considered to be emancipated from the discipline that is right and proper for the unenlightened; and it is hardly to be wondered at that accusations of immorality have been frequently made—generally, we are assured, without foundation.

The suspicions of the non-elect have been fostered by the character of the Sufi literature. The union of the human soul with the Divine Soul is described in language that might well fall from the lips of a poet of romantic passion. There is a riot of luscious imagery, an intoxicating combination of wine, women, and song. The joys of spiritual love are pictured in erotic terms. Some Muslim commentators have endeavoured to demonstrate that *wine* means spiritual rapture, the beautiful cup-bearer is the spiritual guide, and so on—very much as Christian expositors have argued that the Song

of Solomon should be treated not as a human love-story but as a spiritual allegory.

In the sphere of moral theory the Sufis have added little to the teaching of the Koran and the Sunna. The conduct of everyday life is with them a matter of far less importance than the attainment of union with God.

Ahmadiyya. Not the least interesting and important of the Muslim sects is the Ahmadiyya movement, which consists of the followers of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908), of Qadian, in the Punjab. Ahmad claimed to be the recipient of divine revelation, and in 1889 declared himself to be the Mahdi, the promised Messiah. He taught that Jesus Christ did not die on the cross, but was taken down while in a state of unconsciousness and revived by the ministrations of his friends; during the next forty days he was recovering from his wounds, and then left Palestine and carried his message to the descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel—who were living in the lands between Palestine and India—and died at length, an old man of a hundred and twenty, in Kashmir: his supposed tomb is still pointed out at Srinagar. Ahmad did not maintain that he was a reincarnation of Jesus, but that he was sent “in the spirit and power of Jesus” just as John the Baptist was sent in the spirit and power of Elijah.

On Ahmad's death there was a split in the movement, but the main body continued to have its centre in Qadian. Both parties inaugurated missionary movements, and the Qadian party in particular has regular missions in foreign countries. A strong bid is made for converts among educated Europeans, and Islam is preached as a religion that has nothing to fear from the discoveries of modern science. Polygamy and the subjection of women, and other features that have been censured by non-Muslim opinion, are stated to be among the non-essentials. Not a few Muslims who had lapsed from the faith of their fathers have been won back by the attractive restatement of Islam for which Ahmadiyya is responsible.

Islam is the youngest of the great religions of the world. From the Hegira to the present is little more than thirteen hundred years; and we have only to compare the Christianity of the fourteenth century with that of our own day to realize what vast changes, what tremendous possibilities and potentialities, may still have to work themselves out in Islam. As things are, the religion of Allah and Mohammed the Prophet of Allah answers the needs of a great and possibly growing proportion of the human race.

CHAPTER XIII

CONFUCIANISM

THERE are three recognized religions in China, known to Westerners as Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. The first two are indigenous, ascending from the animism that was the religion of the primitive tribes who in the days before history peopled the Chinese plain. Buddhism is an importation from India in the first century of the Christian era.

The three religions are not mutually exclusive. It is inconceivable that with us a man should belong at one and the same time to, say, the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England, and the Christian Scientists; but there is no reason at all why a Chinese should not be simultaneously a Confucian, a Taoist, and a Buddhist. In fact, it is impossible to divide the Chinese neatly into categories for the preparation of religious statistics; some hundreds of millions may be counted by the enumerators as Confucians, but they might be, and sometimes are, counted with just as much reason as Buddhists or as Taoists. They *are* Confucians, but they are also Buddhists and Taoists. A comparatively small number of the intellectuals may profess an exclusive belief in Confucianism, which until the revolution of 1912 was the established religion of the State, and even to-day is the most favoured by the authorities; but the great mass of the people belong to each of the three religions and to all three. (A friend who has spent many years among the Chinese people tells me that it would be truer to say, at least of the educated classes, that they are equally indifferent to all three.)

This all-embracing comprehensiveness is facilitated by the almost entire absence of a persecuting spirit. Only very occasionally in the many, many centuries of Chinese history has there been a persecution to record; and the few cases that are remembered have been due not to religious intolerance but to what was held to be political necessity.

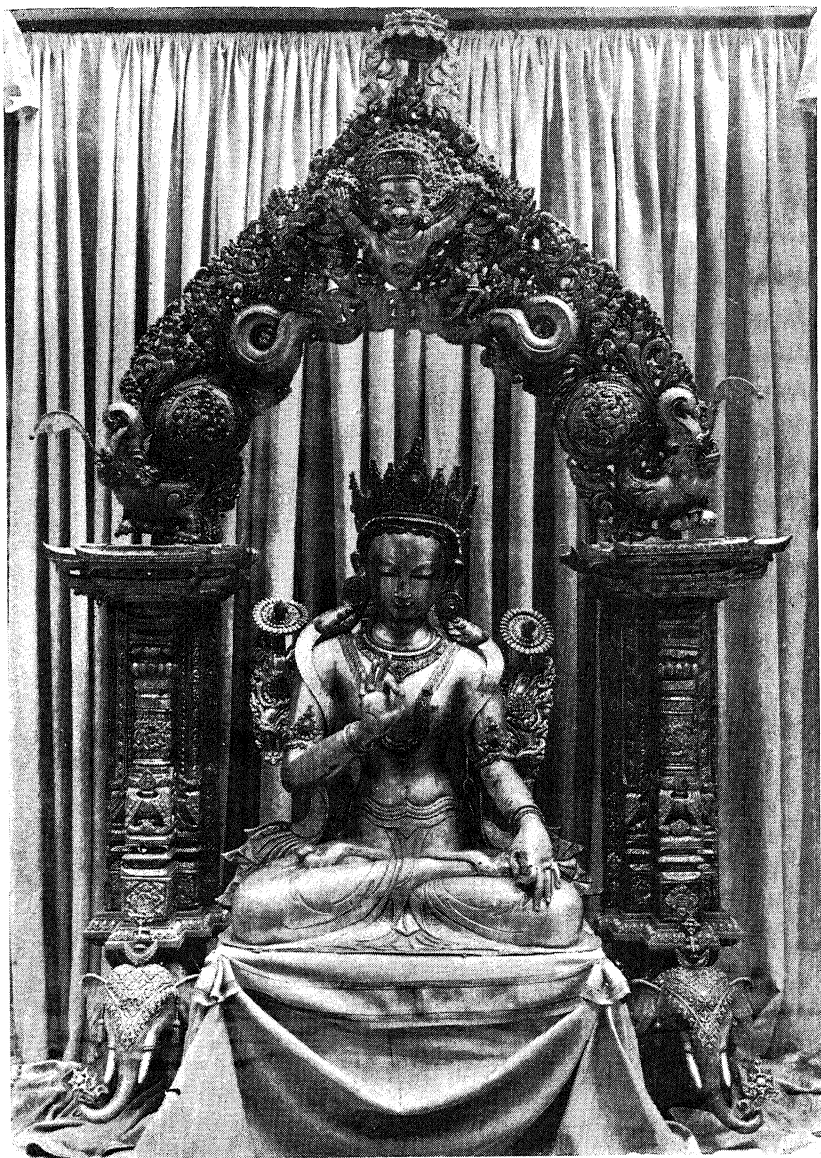
The three religions of China are, then, one, as a Chinese saying puts it, yet they are also distinct.

Confucius. The oldest of the three is Confucianism, named after the famous sage K'ung Fu-tzu, Latinized by the early Roman

Catholic missionaries to China as Confucius. K'ung is his clan name, and K'ung Fu-tzu means "Master K'ung."

Generally, it has been agreed that Confucius was born in or about 551 B.C., and died in 479. Thus he was about twelve years younger than the Buddha and survived him four years. For most of their long lives the two great Oriental thinkers were contemporaries, but there is no evidence that they ever came into contact or were aware of one another's existence.

Born in a village in the state of Lu, in the province that is now Shantung, Confucius, according to one tradition, came of noble stock, although one of the old historians says he was "a humble member of the cotton-clothed masses." His father was a brave soldier of some little distinction, who in his old age had contracted a second marriage. Confucius was the fruit of this union. The father died when the boy was in his third year, and during the years that followed Confucius and his mother were in very straitened circumstances. At nineteen he married, and was soon the father of a son and two daughters. At this time he was a lower-grade public official or civil servant, being the official in charge of the communal grain stores and then superintendent of the parks and cattle-runs. It is said of him that he performed his humble duties with extreme conscientiousness. In 531 B.C., when he was nearly twenty-two, he set up a kind of school—what the contemporary Greeks would have called an academy—for the young and inquiring spirits of the neighbourhood; and he continued as a teacher in Lu—supporting himself on the contributions of his pupils, but not refusing any who could not pay—until 516, when in a period of intense political and social disorder he followed the local duke or marquis to the neighbouring State of Ch'i. But he was uncomfortable there, and it was not long before he returned quietly to Lu. And there for sixteen years more he remained in obscurity, teaching all who would listen to his message, but taking no active part in politics. At length, in 501, Duke Ting appointed him governor of the town of Chung-tu; and so successful did he prove as an administrator, and as a reformer of the public and private morals, that in a year's time he was elevated to the position of minister of works, and then minister of crime—whereupon there was soon no more crime. We are told that he strengthened the ruler and repressed the local barons. The dishonest and dissolute were made to feel ashamed and hide their heads. Loyalty and good faith became the characteristics of the men, and chastity and docility those of the women. "He was the idol of the



[Victoria & Albert Museum]

KUANYIN, GODDESS OF MERCY

Gilt and copper enamelled image, executed by a master craftsman in a Tibetan monastery some three hundred years ago, of the female Bodhisattva so greatly loved by Chinese Buddhists.

people, and flew in songs through their mouths," so that, from all the surrounding states, visitors came to study and admire his achievements. But his period of office was too short for his theories to be fully tried out. He held up too high a standard to suit the tastes of the time; and jealousy, selfishness, and treachery undid his work and secured his fall. With a pride that did him credit he resigned his post when the marquis of Ch'i sent his master eighty beautiful girls, trained in dancing and music, and a troop of a hundred and twenty fine horses, in the hope of destroying the influence of Confucius and removing an example that was so good that it led to odious comparisons. The ruler of Lu accepted the women and the horses and let the philosopher go.

In 497 Confucius, now well over fifty, left Lu and went abroad, and for some dozen years he wandered from state to state, accompanied by a small band of faithful disciples and studying the ways and means of the local governments. Time and again he was invited to settle down and assume a governorship, but he would not do so, he declared, unless he were granted an absolutely free hand in applying his principles. "If any ruler would submit to me as his director for twelve months," he said once, "I should accomplish something considerable; and in three years I should attain the realization of my hopes." And another of his recorded sayings runs, "Not more surely does the grass bend before the wind than the masses yield to the will of those above them." He felt in his bones that he could form a model ruler, if any ruler could be found with sufficient sense to submit himself to his direction; a model ruler would produce a model state, a model people. But though many of the petty dukes heard him with interest, and were glad enough to give him a dinner and a bed, they never felt justified in taking him at his own valuation. To the end of his days he was condemned to remain a theorist.

What he was like at sixty-five or so he has told us himself: "A man who in his eager pursuit of knowledge forgets his food, and in the joy of its attainment forgets his sorrows, and who does not perceive that old age is coming on!"

The years of self-imposed banishment came to an end in 483—the year that Buddha died and three years before the Greeks smashed the Persian fleet at Salamis—when Duke Ting died, and his son and successor cordially invited the ageing sage to return to his native land. Confucius did so; but although he was received with acclamation and ever after held in high honour, he persisted in his attitude

that he was too old (he was 70) to take an active part in the government. He spent the few years that were left to him in rearranging the music to which the ancient odes were sung, writing a history of Lu, and instructing his disciples—who were now to be counted in thousands, including some who, as he himself said, were “scholars of extraordinary ability.” In 481 died his favourite disciple, whom he mourned with a grief that struck some as immoderate; and shortly afterwards his second favourite disciple met with a tragic end. We are given a pathetic picture of the old man rising early one morning and going to the door, with his hands behind his back and dragging his staff, and mumbling :

The great mountain must crumble,
The strong beam must break,
The wise man must wither away like a plant.

When a disciple hurried up to support and comfort him he complained that no intelligent ruler had arisen to take him as his master. “My time has come to die.” Wearied of life, he took to his bed, and in seven days was dead. He uttered no prayer, we are told, and betrayed no apprehension.

As his body was carried to the grave, a great multitude followed, sorrowing. Like many another wise and good man, he was thought more of dead than alive. To this day his tomb outside the city of K’uh-Fow is a place of pilgrimage, and the statue at the top of the cypress-lined avenue bears the title bestowed by the Sung emperors: “The most sagely ancient Teacher; the all-accomplished, all-informed King.” The neighbouring city is still the seat of the K’ung family, and there are probably more Chinese who claim to be descended from Confucius than there are Americans whose ancestors “came over” in the “Mayflower.” One descendant served in France with the Chinese during the Great War of 1914-18.

The Chinese Classics. Confucius called himself “a transmitter and not a creator,” and his main work was the collecting and editing of writings on history, poetry, and morals which had long existed. The ancient books he is supposed to have compiled are the Five King—the five canonical works or Chinese Classics :

Yi-King, or the Book of Changes.

Shu-King, or the Book of History.

Shih-King, or the Book of Poetry.

Li-King, or the Book of Ritual.

Ch’un Ch’iu, or Spring and Autumn Annals, also called the Annals of Lu, being a chronicle of events from 722 to 481 B.C.

in that petty kingdom. This last is the only one of the five claimed by Confucius as his own composition.

Most of the ethical teaching of Confucius was delivered by word of mouth, and this was preserved by his devoted disciples in three small volumes which are called the Four Shu (*shu* meaning writings or books):

Lun Yu, the Confucian Analects.

Ta Hsiao, or "Great Learning."

Chêung Yung, or "Doctrine of the Mean."

Meng Tzu, the Philosophy of Mencius.

As revealed in these writings, the moral teaching of Confucius displays little originality, but its ethical quality is none the less high. We find, of course, what we should regard as an excessive reverence for the past; the Chinese are inheritors of a very ancient civilization—there were populous cities in China when *our* ancestors lived in shacks and dressed in woad—and they never forget the fact. Filial piety is carried to a degree unknown to Western nations, and regard for one's progenitors has developed into "ancestor worship." Taken all in all, the Confucian ethical code is excellent and practical, writes Professor W. E. Soothill, but by no means heroic.

Prosaic and not poetic, it commands respect rather than admiration; indeed, both in its religious and moral aspects, the whole code of Confucius resembles the wintry silver of the moon rather than the golden glow and warmth of the sun. Nothing is left to the imagination, nothing stirs it, for to him the romantic would have been repugnant, and to turn the other cheek pusillanimity.¹

The five cardinal virtues are: kindness, rectitude, decorum, wisdom, and sincerity. Moderation, courtesy, and self-control are the determining characteristics of the Confucian system, which is eminently suited to the needs of the reasonable man. Moral character is held to be far superior to riches and culture; a man is worthy to the extent he is good, and his goodness is shown, not in religious observances, not even in the avoidance of the sins of the flesh which other moralists have delighted to describe and to denounce, but in the living of a life that is sanely moderate, carefully regulated, and inspired by the golden rule.

The Analects. The earliest and therefore presumably the most reliable picture of Confucius that we possess is the one given in the "Analects," and Mr. Arthur Waley, who has made a fresh translation of the ancient Chinese classic, points out that it contains no

¹ *The Three Religions of China*, by Rev. W. E. Soothill, M.A. (O.U.P., 1929), p. 33

elements that bear patently and obviously the stamp of folk-lore or hagiography. It appears from the "Analects," he writes, that Confucius was a private person who trained the sons of gentlemen in the virtues proper to a member of the ruling classes. But he was not content with this position, and longed for a more public one which would give him the opportunity of putting into practice the Way which he regarded as that of the Former Kings, the Way of Goodness, that had long since been discarded by the rulers of the world in favour of the Way of Violence and Aggression. There is not the slightest indication in the book that he ever obtained such a position. It was long afterwards that the Master evolved from a moral teacher into a "wise man," an answerer of grotesque conundrums, a prophet, a magician even: the disappointed itinerant tutor of the "Analects" is turned into a successful statesman and diplomatist, employed not only in his own country but in other states as well.¹

Even the generally accepted dates of his birth and death are not to be relied upon, asserts Mr. Waley. They were supplied long afterwards, when legend had turned Confucius into a great statesman whose dates were of public importance. It has been suggested that he may have died a quarter of a century later than the accepted date.

Lun Yu, translated "Analects" by Professor James Legge (1815-1897)—the great British Chinese scholar who was for some thirty years a missionary of the London Missionary Society in China, and in the intervals of his religious labours translated the Chinese classics into English—means "Digested Conversations" or "Selected Sayings," and it is a compilation of precepts made by several of the Master's disciples long after his death. To what extent it reports the actual words of Confucius it is impossible to say. Chinese editors—and they are not alone in this—have a habit of attributing to some famous sage reflections and remarks that are so good that they might easily have fallen from his lips and so obtained the authority of his great name. No doubt Confucius, like Solomon, has been made the author of many sayings that he would have heard with a wry face. But the "Analects" contains the sayings that the men who knew Confucius either remembered as having actually fallen from his lips, or at least were in keeping with his known views and attitude towards life.

There is all too little biographical material in this ancient

¹ *The Analects of Confucius*, translated and annotated by Arthur Waley (Allen & Unwin, 1938), p. 13.

writing. "The Master," we are told, "was mild, and yet dignified; majestic, and yet not fierce; respectful, and yet easy."¹

This little pen-picture is supplemented by such items of information as that he was never without ginger when he ate, did not eat much, liked sauce with his meat, and did not converse when eating or in bed. "If his mat were not straight he did not sit on it."

In his village he looked simple and sincere, as if he were not able to speak; at court he spoke freely, in a straightforward manner, blandly but precisely. When the prince was present his manner was grave but self-possessed.

"At fifteen," the Master (Confucius) is reported to have said, "I had my mind bent on learning. At thirty, I stood firm. At forty, I had no doubts. At fifty, I knew the decrees of heaven. At sixty, my ear was an obedient organ for the reception of truth. At seventy I could follow what my heart desired, without transgressing what was right."

"In a hamlet of ten families," runs another of his sayings, "there may be found one honourable and sincere as I am, but not so fond of learning." If he could be given a few more years, he said on another occasion, he would devote fifty to the study of the Yi, "and then I might come to be without great faults."

A transmitter and not a maker: so he modestly called himself; one who believed in and loved the ancients. He had silently treasured up knowledge, learnt without satiety, and instructed others without being wearied. "In letters I am perhaps equal to other men; but the character of the superior man, carrying out in his conduct what he professes, is what I have not yet attained to."

• There were four things the Master taught, we are told—letters, ethics, devotion of soul, and truthfulness. "There were four things from which the Master was entirely free. He had no foregone conclusions, no arbitrary predeterminations, no obstinacy, and no egoism."

Once he was asked to give his definition of perfect virtue or goodness. "It is," he replied, "when you go abroad, to behave to everyone as if you were receiving a great guest; to employ the people as if you were assisting at a great sacrifice; not to do to others as you would not wish done to yourself"—the negative version of the Golden Rule, it will be noted, like the Rabbi Hillel's; "to have no murmuring against you in the country, and none in the family."

¹ This and following quotations are from Vol. I of James Legge's version, *The Chinese Classics*, with a translation, notes, etc., in 7 vols. (Hong Kong, 1861).

When another disciple asked him the same question, he described perfect virtue as being: "in retirement, to be sedately grave; in the management of business, to be reverently attentive; in intercourse with others, to be strictly sincere. Though a man go among rude, uncultivated tribes, these qualities may not be neglected."

"Shall I teach you what knowledge is?" he once demanded of a disciple. "When you know a thing, to hold that you know it; and when you do not know a thing, to allow that you do not know it—this is knowledge."

There is much in the "Analects" about the Superior Man, as James Legge translated it, or the Gentleman, as Mr. Waley prefers to render the term.

There are three things which the superior man guards against. In youth, when the physical powers are not yet settled, he guards against lust. When he is strong, and the physical powers are full of vigour, he guards against quarrelsomeness. When he is old, and the animal powers are decaying, he guards against covetousness.

There are three things of which the superior man stands in awe. He stands in awe of the ordinances of Heaven. He stands in awe of great men. He stands in awe of the words of sages. The mean man, on the other hand, does not know the ordinances of Heaven, and consequently does not stand in awe of them. He is disrespectful to great men. He makes sport of the words of sages.

There are nine things, according to Confucius, that are subjects of thoughtful consideration to the superior man.

In regard to the use of his eyes, he is anxious to see clearly. In regard to the use of his ears, he is anxious to hear distinctly. In regard to his countenance, he is anxious that it should be benign. In regard to his demeanour, he is anxious that it should be respectful. In regard to his speech, he is anxious that it should be sincere. In regard to his doing of business, he is anxious that it should be reverently careful. In regard to what he doubts about, he is anxious to question others. When he is angry, he thinks of the difficulties his anger may involve him in. When he sees gain to be got, he thinks of righteousness.

When he was asked if the Superior Man has any hatreds, Confucius replied that he has indeed.

He hates those who proclaim the evil of others. He hates the man who, being in a low station, slanders his superiors. He hates those who have valour merely, and are unobservant of propriety. He hates those who are forward and determined, and, at the same time, of contracted understanding.

A scholar should be grave, said the Master, for if not he will not call forth any veneration, and his learning will not be solid. "Hold

faithfulness and sincerity as first principles," he went on. "Have no friends not equal to yourself. When you have faults, do not fear to abandon them"—or as Mr. Waley renders it, if a man "finds he has made a mistake, then he must not be afraid of admitting the fact and amending his ways."

Here are some miscellaneous aphorisms:

Learning without thought is labour lost; thought without learning is perilous.

To see what is right and not to do it is want of courage.

I have not seen one who loves virtue as he loves beauty.

Where the solid qualities are in excess of accomplishments, we have rusticity; where the accomplishments are in excess of the solid qualities, we have the manners of a clerk. When the accomplishments and solid qualities are equally blended, then we have the man of complete virtue.

When a man of forty is the object of dislike, he will always continue what he is.

And here is an almost whimsical reflection:

The Master said: Of all people, girls [concubines] and servants are the most difficult to behave to. If you are familiar with them, they lose their humility. If you maintain a reserve toward them, they are discontented.

Reading the words preserved in the "Analects" by those who knew Confucius best and loved him most, one gets the impression of a serenely sane philosopher, who was little interested in any life but that of the ordinary, everyday present. He may have believed in a Supreme Being, the creator and sustainer of all things, but he did not approach that Being in fear and trembling, nor in humble contriteness of heart. Since he countenanced "ancestor-worship"—we are told that "he sacrificed to the dead as if they were present, he sacrificed to the spirits as if the spirits were present"—it may be supposed that he had some belief in a life beyond the grave; but "spiritual beings" was one of the subjects on which he refused to talk, and when one of his disciples asked him about death he replied: "Not yet understanding life, how can you understand death?" Indeed, so untheological is Confucius' general attitude to life that some have denied to Confucianism the right to be included among the world's religions.

Whether a religion or a philosophy, however, it is that system of beliefs which for more than two thousand years was the orthodoxy of China. Confucius himself was canonized in A.D. 1; styled "the accomplished Sage" in 492, and "the ancient Teacher, the perfect

Sage" in 657; and in 1908 raised by the old Empress Dowager to the highest rank of those beings who are entitled to have sacrifices in their honour.

The Great Learning. The second of the Chinese classics is of uncertain authorship, but Professor Legge was disposed to refer it to the fifth century B.C. as synchronizing pretty nearly with the "Analects."

"What the Great Learning teaches, is—to illustrate illustrious virtue; to renovate the people; and to rest in the highest excellence." So runs the opening sentence—again in Professor Legge's translation—of the little treatise:

The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the Empire, first ordered well their own States. Wishing to order well their States, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things.

All these things being done, the whole empire was made tranquil and happy.

The rest of the little book is but an expansion of this theme, of the dependence of political good government on personal virtue. The standard of behaviour demanded of ruler and ruled alike is a high one.

When the sovereign behaves to his aged, as the aged should be behaved to, the people become filial; when the sovereign behaves to his elders, as elders should be behaved to, the people learn brotherly submission; when the sovereign treats compassionately the young and helpless, the people do the same. Thus the ruler has a principle with which, as with a measuring square, he may regulate his conduct.

Immediately following is an expansion of the Golden Rule:

What a man dislikes in his superiors, let him not display in the treatment of his inferiors; what he dislikes in inferiors, let him not display in the service of his superiors; what he hates in those who are before him, let him not therewith precede those who are behind him; what he hates in those who are behind him, let him not therewith follow those who are before him; what he hates to receive on the right, let him not bestow on the left; what he hates to receive on the left, let him not bestow on the right: this is what is called "The principle, with which, as with a measuring square, to regulate one's conduct."

In truth, as James Legge maintained, the Work which contains such principles as these cannot be thought meanly of. "They are 'commonplace,' but they are at the same time eternal verities."

The Doctrine of the Mean. The composition of the third of the Confucian classical books is attributed to a grandson of Confucius, one K'ung Keih by name, who in his boyhood was the Sage's companion and received his instructions; and throughout a long life—he is said to have become a centenarian—he maintained an independence and a dignity not unbecoming of his descent and upbringing. In the Confucian hierarchy he bears the title of “The Philosopher Tsze-sze, Transmitter of the Sage.”

The whole of the Chung Yung—it is quite short—is summed up in the opening chapter.

Man's nature is received from Heaven. To act in accordance with that nature is to follow the path of duty. That path may not be left for an instant: if it could be left, it would not be the path.

While there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, the mind may be said to be in a state of *equilibrium*. When these feelings have been stirred, and they act in their due degree, there ensues what may be called the state of *harmony*. This equilibrium is the great root from which grow all the human actings in the world, and this harmony is the universal path which they all should pursue. Let the states of equilibrium and harmony exist in perfection, and a happy order will prevail throughout heaven and earth, and all things will be nourished and flourish.

In the second chapter the Superior Man makes his appearance: he embodies the course of the Mean. A few pages on, and we are told that he cultivates a friendly harmony, without being weak; he stands erect in the middle, without inclining to either side. “When good principles prevail in the government of his country he does not change from what he was in retirement. When bad principles prevail in the country, he maintains his course to death without changing.” He does what is proper to the station in which he finds himself, and does not want to go beyond it. Never can he find himself in a situation in which he is not himself.

In a high situation, he does not treat with contempt his inferiors. In a low situation, he does not court the favour of his superiors. He rectifies himself, and seeks for nothing from others, so that he has no dissatisfactions. He does not murmur against heaven nor grumble against men.

There are five “duties of universal obligation”: those between sovereign and minister, between father and son, between husband and wife, between elder brother and younger, and those belonging to the intercourse of friends; in all, knowledge, magnanimity, and energy are the three virtues universally binding.

But "sincerity is the way of Heaven." Sincerity is the end and beginning of things, so that the Superior Man regards the attainment of sincerity as the most excellent thing. He who attains to sincerity is he who chooses what is good, and firmly holds it fast. Entire sincerity is the distinguishing characteristic of the Superior Man.

One more remarkable passage may be quoted. "When one cultivates to the utmost the principles of his nature, and exercises them on the principle of reciprocity, he is not far from the path. *What you do not like, when done to yourself, do not do to others.*"

So once again the Golden Rule is plainly stated, and since it is not found in the older classics the honour of its framing is Confucius' own. Professor Soothill suggests that the word rendered by Legge "reciprocity" means something more than "do as you would be done by"—something that may be described as the idea of following one's better nature—that is, Be generous.

Mencius. As already mentioned, the fourth of the Confucian classics is the writings of Mencius (the Latinized form of Mêng Tzu—the philosopher Meng). He is supposed to have been born in 372 B.C., a hundred years after the death of Confucius, and to have died in 289 B.C., at the age of eighty-four. He was thus a contemporary of Plato and Aristotle, Epicurus, Zeno, Demosthenes, and other great thinkers of the West, and James Legge has said that when placed among them Mencius "can look them in the face." His father died early, and he was brought up by his mother, who for ages has been regarded as the pattern of Chinese motherhood. Then he became a pupil of disciples of Confucius' grandson, and henceforth devoted himself to the study and practice of the way of life laid down by the Master. Like Confucius, he lived at petty courts and strove to persuade the rulers to reign in accordance with the Confucian precepts. But in his search for the philosopher-king he was as disappointed as Confucius himself had been, and his last years were spent in retirement from a world that he had found full of disappointments. Not long before he died he compiled, with the help of a disciple, the book that bears his name.

As an ethical teacher Mencius was essentially practical, like his great master before him. He was also hopeful. "Speaking realistically," he said, "it is possible for men to be good, and that is what I mean when I say that men's nature is good. If they become evil it is not the fault of their natural powers. Thus all men have a sense of compassion, also a sense of shame over wickedness, a sense of reverence, and a sense of truth and error. The sense of compassion

is equivalent to individual morality, the sense of shame to public morality, the sense of reverence to ritual propriety, and the sense of right and wrong equals wisdom."

Men have these "four tender shoots," he goes on, just as they have four limbs: they are qualities born with us, not introduced later from without.

What I mean by all men having a sense of compassion is that if, for instance, a child is suddenly seen to be on the point of falling into a well, everybody without exception will have a sense of distress. It is not by reason of any close intimacy with the parents of the child, nor by reason of a desire for the praise of neighbours and friends, nor by reason of disliking to be known as the kind of man who is not moved by compassion. From this point of view we observe that it is inhuman to have no sense of compassion, inhuman to have no sense of shame over wickedness, inhuman to have no sense of modesty and the need for yielding place to a better man, inhuman not to distinguish right and wrong. . . .¹

But, objected a disciple on one occasion, "Isn't it the rule that males and females shall not allow their hands to touch in giving or receiving anything?" "Yes," replied Mencius; "what then?" "Well," said the disciple, "if a man's sister-in-law is drowning, shall he rescue her with his hand?" Whereupon Mencius replied, that though males and females were not allowed to touch one another in giving or receiving anything, the man who refused to rescue a drowning woman would be a wolf, and not a man. To save one's sister-in-law when drowning was the exception that proved the rule.

In Mencius a wonderfully good mother had an excellent son, and the philosopher was never tired of stressing the importance—the vital, almost supreme importance—of filial duty. "The desire of the child," he said, "is towards his father and mother. When he becomes conscious of the attractions of beauty, his desire is towards young and beautiful women. When he comes to have a wife and children, his desire is towards them. When he obtains office, his desire is towards his sovereign. . . . But the man of great filial piety to the end of his life has his desire towards his parents."

These are the outstandingly unfilial things: laziness in the use of one's limbs, gambling and chess-playing and indulgence in wine, fondness for goods and money, selfish attachment to wife and children—all to the extent that the nourishment of one's parent is neglected; following the desire of one's ears and eyes so as to bring one's parents into disgrace; addiction to bravery, fighting, and quarrelling, so that their lives are endangered.

¹ *Chinese Philosophy in Classical Times*, ed. E. R. Hughes (Dent), pp. 100-101.

“Benevolence is the distinguishing characteristic of man,” said Mencius. “As embodied in men’s conduct it is called the path of duty.”

Of Confucianism’s two companion faiths, Taoism is the subject of the following chapter, but a few paragraphs about Buddhism may not be out of place here.

Buddhism reached China from India in A.D. 67, when messengers sent by the Chinese emperor returned to Honanfu with images of Buddha, copies of the Buddhist scriptures, and two Indian monks. For some centuries Chinese natives were forbidden to become monks, and progress was slow. But when this ban was removed, the new religion found wide acceptance among the Chinese. In A.D. 526, indeed, the Patriarch of Indian Buddhism, the twenty-eighth in the list of Buddha’s successors, migrated to China, and thus made that country the seat of the patriarchate. In the centuries that followed, there were periods of official disfavour, even persecution, on the ground that celibacy was opposed to the interests of the Chinese State; but eventually Confucianism came to terms with Buddhism, as it did with Taoism. Chinamen were members of all three religions without showing any serious discomfort.

But Confucianism has never lost its position of supremacy.

“For over two thousand years,” Professor Lionel Giles has written, “Confucianism was tacitly accepted as the rule of life for all educated people at least; and it was only after the Revolution of 1912 that a serious attempt was made, mostly by members of the younger generation, to discard a moral code which they too hastily assumed to be outworn. Since then, however, it has been gradually realized that a teaching which has its roots in the eternal principles of human nature is precisely one that can never become obsolete. Filial piety, conscientiousness and charity, tolerance towards others, and a saving sense of moderation in all things—these are virtues which, so far as one can judge, will always be essential to the well-being and happiness of mankind.”

CHAPTER XIV

TAOISM

TAOISM, the third of the three religions—some would prefer the word “doctrines”—of the Chinese millions, is supposed to have been founded by one Lao Tzu (Lao-Tse or, in the Latinized form, Laocius), who, according to tradition, was born in a hamlet in Ho-nan province about 604 B.C. He would thus be an elder contemporary of Confucius, and it is said that the two met in 517. Separated by more than half a century, the two philosophers can hardly have seen eye to eye, and it is reported that the older sage told the younger to “put away, sir, your proud airs and your many desires, your affected mien and excessive ambition, for they will do you no good.” Confucius was deeply impressed, and said to his disciples that Lao Tzu should be compared with the dragon which “mounts on the wind through the clouds and rises to heaven.”

Even tradition has very little to say of Lao Tzu's career. We are informed that he was a keeper of the royal archives or of the treasury at the court at Chow, but in his old age he retired from office and went on a journey to the west. At the entrance to the pass on the north-west boundary of Ho-nan, the warden of the gate prayed that he would compose a book for him before he passed out of sight. Whereupon Lao Tzu “made a writing, setting forth his views on the Tao and virtue, in two sections, containing more than 5,000 characters. He then went away, and it is not known when he died.” The same ancient writer states that the philosopher was “a superior man, who liked to keep in obscurity.”

Tao Tê Ching. So much for the traditional details of Lao Tzu's life, and it only remains to be said that modern scholars are inclined to dismiss the whole story as pure legend. Who the founder of Taoism really was remains a mystery that is very unlikely to be solved. Nor shall we ever know for certain who was the author of the *Tao Tê Ching*, the book that is the chief expression of the Taoist gospel. Traditionally it is the book that Lao Tzu left behind him at the gate when he went away into the misty west; but modern critics are inclined to ascribe it to a much later period, since in

its present form it suggests the third century B.C. rather than the sixth, when Lao Tzu is presumed to have lived.

But what its original form was it is impossible to determine. In its arrangement it is altogether incoherent. The chapters are not really divisions, and there are evidences of passages being misplaced—which is not surprising when we are told that, before the invention of printing, Chinese books were written on bamboo-tablets fastened together with strips of leather and handed down from generation to generation: if the string broke, it was only too easy for the tablets to be put together again in the wrong order, particularly when—as in this case—the subject-matter affords very little guide to the proper sequence. Furthermore, many of the little book's five thousand signs are archaic or doubtful, what with the blunders of copyists and editors; and in the original there is no punctuation, since this is of quite recent use in Chinese writing. So it comes about that there are as many different versions of the Tao Tê Ching as there have been translators. And these are legion: it is said that, with the single exception of the Bible, no book has been translated so often.

Tao Tê Ching has been interpreted as the Classic (or Canon) of Tao and Tê. Tê is translated "virtue," and Tao means "road" or "way" in ordinary usage, but in its philosophical sense is a shortened form of T'ien Tao, the Way of Heaven. Thus in Taoism, as in Confucianism and in Buddhism, we have something of the same idea, of a course of action that the good man should follow if he would be wise, and the wise man should follow if he would be good. But there are striking differences. Buddha urged his followers to tread the Eightfold Path because it enabled them to pass through this life with a calm indifference. Confucius maintained that his Way of Goodness would make for a happy, prosperous, and altogether worth-while life in the world that the Buddhist is taught to despise. As for Lao Tzu—his testament is so small as to be tiny, but it has proved big enough to give rise to a vast body of commentary which has made its original obscurity darker still.

The Tao that can be expressed is not the eternal Tao;

The name that can be defined is not the unchanging name. . . .

So it begins, and at once we are in need of an interpreter. Mr. Ch'u Ta-kao, whose translation is remarkable in that, altogether apart from its individual quality, it is the first English rendering of the work by a native of China to be published in this country—expresses it as: "The eternal Tao cannot be put into words, nor

can the unchanging name be given a definition; for words are but symbols and a definition is based upon the relativity of things. How can they represent the all-embracing, true Tao and the nameless name? So only for the convenience of speaking we call it Tao." ¹

A little later Lao Tzu speaks of

A thing inherent and natural,
Which existed before heaven and earth.
Motionless and fathomless,
It stands alone and never changes;
It pervades everywhere and never becomes exhausted.
It may be regarded as the Mother of the Universe.
I do not know its name.
If I am forced to give it a name,
I call it Tao, and I name it as supreme. (xxv.)

So it would seem that Tao might almost be translated Nature; at least the Way that Lao Tzu describes has much in common with natural phenomena, which emerged out of the primal nothingness and go on and on, irresistible in their movement, yet so quiet, without fuss and bother and noise, to the end that is theirs. As Nature is, so should Man be.

Taoism is no religion for the busybody, for the man who has an itch to put the world to rights. Passage after passage reflects the gospel of *laissez-faire*, e.g. "The more restrictions there are in the empire, the poorer become the people." And again, "When the government is blunt and inactive the people will be happy and prosperous; when the government is discriminative, the people will be dissatisfied and restless." And yet again: "The people starve. Because their officials take heavy taxes from them, therefore they starve. The people are hard to rule. Because their officials meddle with affairs, therefore they are hard to rule." A great state, we are told, should be governed in the same way as you would cook a small fish—gently.

Lao Tzu's idea of Utopia was of a little commonwealth such as was conceived in Sir Thomas More's fertile brain, and very much the same principles would prevail in the one as in the other. The Chinese sage would allow the people to have boats and carriages—but he would prefer that they did not travel in them. He would allow them arms and armour—but they should not be flaunted. He would have them go back to the use of knotted cords for counting,

¹ *Tao Tê Ching: A New Translation*, by Ch'u Ta-kao (Buddhist Lodge, London, 1937), p. 9.

instead of using written figures. His Utopians would be "satisfied with their food; delighted in their dress; comfortable in their dwellings; happy with their customs." He could not prevent their seeing into their neighbours' countries, since these were so close that one could hear the cocks crowing and the dogs barking. But if he could prevent it they would never cross the frontier; they would always stay at home.

After this it is not surprising to find that he was no believer in popular education. "People are difficult to govern because they have much knowledge. Therefore to govern the country by increasing the people's knowledge is to be the destroyer of the country; to govern the country by decreasing their knowledge is to be the blesser of the country." Simplicity is better than knowledge: "The further one travels, the less one knows." "Thinking that one knows when one does not know is sickness."

Here is a picture of the Virtuous Man as Lao Tzu sees him:

He who knows others is wise;
 He who knows himself is enlightened.
 He who conquers others is strong;
 He who conquers himself is mighty.
 He who knows contentment is rich.
 He who keeps on his course with energy has will.
 He who does not deviate from his proper place will long endure.
 He who may die but not perish has longevity.

Elsewhere the "perfect man of Tao" is pictured as cautious, like one who crosses a stream in winter; hesitating, like one who fears his neighbours; modest, like a guest; yielding, like ice about to melt; simple, like wood that is not yet shaped; vacant, as a hollow valley; and dim, like turbid water.

Often Lao Tzu employs water as the simile of the highest goodness—water, so weak and yielding in itself, yet there is nothing better for attacking the hard and the strong. Moreover, it is so common and humble, and humility is a fundamental virtue in Taoist ethics.

Strife and struggle are unreservedly condemned. He who has Tao will have nothing to do with weapons, however beautiful, for they are instruments of ill omen. In conquest he takes no delight. If he did, it would mean that he enjoyed slaughter, and "he who takes delight in the slaughter of men cannot have his will done in the world." And again, "What others teach, I also teach: 'The daring and violent do not die a natural death.'"



IN A TAOIST TEMPLE

Before the images of "Immortal Chang," bestower of boy babies, and the "Lady who Gives Children," women of Peking kneel in supplication for the gift of a son. The characters at the top read "Protectors of Babies," and the dolls may be votive offerings or an example of imitative magic.

Three precious possessions, three treasures, the man of Tao holds and keeps safe :

The first is called love ;

The second is called moderation ;

The third is called not venturing to go ahead of the world.

Then there is an aphorism which might have fallen from the lips of Jesus. "Return love for great hatred," it runs ; or as it has been otherwise translated, "Recompense injury with kindness." When this was submitted to Confucius for his consideration, he is reported to have condemned it. "With what, then, will you recompense kindness ?" he asked ; and went on : "Recompense kindness with kindness, but injury with justice."

Taoism in Evolution. One of the most popular books in the vast literature of the Chinese people—a book which Professor Soothill says every missionary to China ought to read, since it is the high-water mark of Chinese detailed description of good and evil—is the Kan Ying P'ien, or tractate on Actions and their Consequences. It was written by a Taoist thinker nearly a thousand years ago, and its quality may be judged from this passage, translated by Professor Soothill :

Transgression great and small is seen in several hundred things. He who wishes for long life must first and foremost avoid these. In the way that is right let him go forward. From the way that is wrong let him withdraw. Let him not walk in devious ways, nor wrong himself in secret. Let him lay up virtue and amass merit, be compassionate to (all) creatures, loyal, filial, faithful to friends, and respectful to elders. Let him correct himself and transform others. Let him pity the fatherless and show kindness to the widow, reverence the old, and cherish the young. Even creeping things, plants, and trees let him not injure. Let him sorrow over men's ills, and rejoice over their good, help them in their straits, and save them in their perils. Let him look upon the (blessings) received by others as if they were his own, and upon the losses of others as if they were his own losses. Let him not show up their shortcomings, nor make a display of his own long-comings (superiorities). Let him resist that which is evil, and spread abroad that which is good. Let him yield much and take little, receive insult without resentment, and favour with (grateful) surprise, bestow kindness without seeking a return, and give to others without regret.

Such a man is called a good man—all men reverence him, Heaven in its course protects him, blessing and prosperity attend him, all evil influences keep far from him, the spirits defend him, whatsoever he doeth prospers, and he may aspire to immortality. . . .¹

Another Taoist booklet commended by Professor Soothill is the Kung Kuo K'uo, or Diary of Merits and Demerits. This contains

¹ Soothill, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

an ingenious system of markings, whereby the man who is resolved to be good may keep an account with himself, striking a balance at the end of each day. Thus, if he has stopped a fight he may count plus one, and if he has persuaded people to abstain from eating for a year, plus twenty. To return a favour counts twenty; but to keep a promise, and to refrain from taking what is not one's own, count only one apiece. On the other hand, gossiping with an evil tongue counts minus three, and to betray a neighbour's secret counts minus fifty.

How does Taoism compare with Confucianism? Dr. Lin Yutang shows that the latter works wonderfully for the common people, both those who wear official buttons and those who kow-tow to them. But for some natures, and for most natures at some times, Confucianism is too decorous, too reasonable, too correct. There are times when a man wants to go about with dishevelled hair, which Confucianism does not quite permit. But Taoism does—and bare feet too, if you feel an urge that way. A Confucian would take pasteurized Grade A milk, while a Taoist would take fresh milk from the milkman's pail in the country fashion. Confucianism has no fairies, while Taoism has. Taoism appeals to the romantic side of the Chinese people, to their happy-go-lucky view of life, to that "old roguery" on which Dr. Lin Yutang puts such strong emphasis.¹

About 300 B.C., when the Chou dynasty was nearing its end, the Chinese developed a craze for alchemy. Like the Europeans of many centuries later, they made prolonged and determined efforts to discover the secret recipe for the transmutation of base metals into gold, and to produce an elixir of immortality. A special kind of culture was devised, consisting of physical exercises, carefully-chosen diet, and the regulation of breathing, which it was hoped would render the body impregnable against death's assault. From somewhere or other drifted in tales of men who had succeeded in the endeavour; and more than one Chinese emperor fitted out an expedition to discover the fairyland out on the high seas, where those who had achieved immortality in the flesh lived in a state of perpetual bliss.

Under the Han dynasty (206 B.C.—A.D. 221) a book was published giving the biographical particulars of seventy persons—including a few women—who had become immortals or *hsien*, and in the succeeding centuries the number of *hsien* was continually added to.

¹ Lin Yutang, *My Country and My People* (Heinemann), p. 116.

Then, in the first century of our era, there was another marked development. The age was one of great Buddhist activity in China, and so numerous were the converts that the Taoists were driven into emulation. Under the leadership of one Chang Tao-ling, they paid their rivals the compliment of imitation, founding monasteries and nunneries by the score and erecting temples all over the country to house the images of the vast number of gods and goddesses whom they appropriated and adopted. The deities were so mixed up in the process that it is quite usual at the present day to find a Buddhist priest in charge of a Taoist temple.

Chang Tao-ling was the first of a long line of Celestial Preceptors ("Taoist Popes") who have managed to combine a reputation for magic with considerable skill in politics. In course of time the emperor granted them a fief—a kind of papal state—in Kiangsi, and this is still the centre of the Taoist Church.

Taoism to-day has not very much to remind us of the doctrine Lao Tzu is supposed to have preached. He himself has been deified, and with the Jade Emperor, or Supreme Ruler of the Universe, and the Primordial Heaven-honoured One, forms the trinity that is worshipped under the title of the Three Pure Ones. Other gods and goddesses are legion, including such high-sounding potentates as the Dragon Kings who produce or withhold rain, and the Empress of Heaven.

For the rest, Taoism is a system of magic and sorcery, of which the basis is the notion of *yin* and *yang*, the male and female principles of Nature, which by their conjugation have brought forth heaven and earth and all the beings and whatever else they contain. The priests are wonder-workers whose assistance is invoked to produce rain, or clear haunted houses of demons, or compound aphrodisiacs for the love-lorn; and the student is not exhorted to lead the life of virtue so much as to join in the search for the elixir of life and the philosopher's stone. Taoism has much in common with the Spiritualism that flourishes in Western lands, more particularly in time of war; and the crosses and amulets and lucky charms that hang from the neck of the otherwise so sophisticated modern girl have their parallel in the myriads of soldiers cut out of paper by Chinese women at the time of the Boxer rising at the beginning of this century—paper warriors that, so the Taoists believed, were at once transformed into spiritual Boxer soldiers, fully armed and equipped to fight and overcome the hated white men from the West.

CHAPTER XV

SHINTO

MANY millions of Japanese are Buddhists, and a very much smaller number are Christians. But practically all Japanese are Shintoists—or perhaps we should use the past tense, since this, the one really national and universal faith of the Japanese people, was “abolished” by General MacArthur’s decree in October, 1945, following Japan’s complete defeat in the World War.

Shinto is the Chinese rendering of the Japanese *Kami no Michi*, which may be translated “The Way of the Gods,” i.e. the ceremonies and teachings relating to the Japanese divinities or spirits.

There is no God in Shinto, but there is a practically unlimited number of gods and godlets. Almost it would seem that every place and every thing has its own particular divinity. The pantheon includes national heroes, gods of learning and happiness, gods of the harvest, gods of the gate, the well, the houseplace, gods of mountains and streams, trees, and flowers.

Yet there are so many religious things missing from Shinto that it has often been maintained that it is not really a religion at all. Thus it has no sacred books, no Bible, to guide its believers. It has no creed, no particular philosophical system. It displays no missionary zeal, since it is never supposed that those who are not Japanese subjects should wish to become enrolled in the Shinto Church, even if they were otherwise eligible. There is no paradise promised to the man of goodwill and behaviour, nor is there a hell in which the wicked man must pay for his iniquities. There is not even an intermediate place of purgatory. There is next to no public worship. There are no altars on which bloody sacrifices are offered to the gods. There are priests, but their intervention is not ordinarily required, since the deities are not of the kind to need propitiation. There is no priestcraft and no pope. Nor, finally, is there, in the national manifestation of the faith, a moral code, a system of do’s and don’ts which must be observed by the believer.

Shinto’s one peculiar feature is the attitude it adopts towards the Imperial Family of Japan. The Emperor is regarded as a god; and all his ancestors have been gods, right back to Jimmu, who

ascended the throne in 660 B.C. and (so it is taught in the State schools) was the grandson of the Sun-goddess, Amaterasu-Omikami. The Mikado, to give him the title so frequently used in the West but never in Japan, is declared to be a lineal descendant of the gods who founded the Japanese State and people; and his heavenly origin has been through more than two thousand five hundred years of history the foundation of Japanese government and ordered civilization. This it has remained even in our own day, amid unparalleled disasters and humiliations. Loyalty to the Throne is the one thing demanded by Shinto, and it has been unhesitatingly rendered. No other ruling family in the world is looked up to by its subjects with such loyal homage and submissive reverence; and never once, since it became established in the seventh century B.C., has its position as head of the whole nation been disputed, or even questioned, by the people.

Three different sorts or divisions of Shinto are distinguished—State, Domestic, and Sect Shinto.

State Shinto. The first is the religion of loyalty to the Emperor as the expression, the embodiment, of the Japanese State. This is also called Shrine Shinto, since its worship is concentrated in the little shrines that litter the countryside—the houses or dwelling-places of the local deity or deities, who are worshipped with the simplest of rites. The god is supposed to live inside the flimsy if picturesque structure; and to attract his attention the worshipper pulls the cord attached to a primitive kind of bell hanging in the porch. The act of worship consists of nothing more than a clapping of the hands, a few hasty bendings of the knee, and the scattering of a handful of coins. On festival days there are processions and performances of music and dancing; and the most famous shrines attract great crowds of pilgrims, who, like pilgrims everywhere, welcome the opportunity of seeing the world in good company, and, when their devotions have been made, surrender themselves to the pleasures of the drinking-booth and the courtesan's quarter.

The chief centre of Japanese pilgrimage is Isé, where stands the Grand Imperial Shrine of the Sun-goddess, the Great Deity, and her attendant divinities. To the Japanese this is what Mecca is to the Muslims, and what the Holy Places of Jerusalem were to the peoples of mediæval Christendom. The rites are under the immediate direction of the Emperor, and Imperial messengers attend the most solemn ceremonies. Throughout the year the roads leading to Isé are thronged, particularly by bands of girls and young men in

holiday costume, laughing and singing and generally frolicking as they go. Arrived at Isé, they glimpse the outside of the sacred temples—they are almost bare within; buy a paper ticket bearing the names of the Isé deities, that is supposed to have some protective virtue; and obtain some little souvenir that for many years to come will act as a reminder of the gay adventure. Then home again, carrying back with them happy memories revived every time the worshipper bows—as he is supposed to bow every day—in the direction of the “divine palaces of the most holy gods of Isé.”

Another universally-visited centre of State Shinto is the Yasakuni shrine, in the centre of Tokyo, where the spirits of the war dead are enshrined.

Domestic Shinto. The second division takes the form of worship or reverencing the family ancestors. Each house has its god shelf, on which stands a miniature shrine made of wood, containing paper-covered tablets bearing the names of the gods in whom the family put their trust, and of the deceased members of the household for many generations back. Fresh flowers and saké (rice beer), water, and boiled rice are the appropriate offerings made by the living to the dead; and at night little lamps, lit before the tiny temples, shine through the dark.

Sect Shinto. Finally, we have in Sect Shinto the forms of the national religion that are held and practised by the thirteen principal sects that have received official recognition. These sects are divided into groups, viz. the pure Shinto, the Confucian, the mountain, the purification, and the faith-healing sects. It will be worth our while to look a little closely at some of these sects or fellowships, for it is among them that there may be found the ethical teaching and ethical behaviour that is entirely absent from the universal form of Shinto, the national or State Shinto.¹

The first of the pure sects is known as Shinto Honkyoku, “the Main Bureau of Shinto.” It had no special founder, but it sprang into existence in the middle of the 1880’s. It has three main objectives, viz. to emphasize the significance of reverence and the meaning of patriotism; to make plain the heavenly reason and the way of humanity; to revere the Emperor and be obedient to his will. In actual practice it is an intensely patriotic cult, centring its devotion on “our Imperial Family which exalts our race and supports our homes and our magnificent national organization.”

¹ For full details see Dr. D. C. Holtom’s comprehensive survey, *The National Faith of Japan: a study in Modern Shinto* (Kegan Paul, 1938).

One absolute god is postulated, the primary source of all things. This being, the Absolute, functions in time in the form of two principles representing the positive-negative or the male-female potency, which appears in Japanese history as Izanagi and Izanami (sky-father and earth-mother), from whose union proceeded the Sun-goddess Amaterasu, who in turn was the progenitor of the Imperial Family and the Japanese people as a whole. This is the "Truth of the Way of the Gods."

Between them, the two principles or gods, the "positive-negative creative potencies," are the creators of life, and hence of goodness, which is a part of the Way of the Gods. Then there is the Beauty of the Way of the Gods, revealed in the natural loveliness of Japan and in the simple dignity and charm of the religious shrines.

Shinri Kyo, the second of the pure sects, professes to be the "Divine Reason teaching," or the true doctrine of the *kami*. It has Three Articles, very much the same three as Shinto Honkyuko, and in addition a little code of ten negative precepts:

- Do not transgress the will of the gods.
- Do not forget your obligations to ancestors.
- Do not transgress the decrees of the State.
- Do not forget the profound goodness of the gods whereby misfortune is averted and sickness is healed.
- Do not forget that the world is one great family.
- Do not forget the limitations of your own person.
- Even though others become angry do not become angry yourself.
- Do not be slothful in your business.
- Do not be a person who brings blame to the teaching.
- Do not be carried away by foreign teachings.¹

Third and last of the pure Shinto sects is Taisha Kyo; Taisha means "great shrine," and the reference is to the vastly ancient Izumo shrine in the town of Kizuki, on the shores of the Japan Sea.

In a statement of belief this Church has declared itself to be a voluntary association of honest and benevolent people, whose aims are: (1) to make their hearts upright and to govern their bodies; (2) to have compassion on those less fortunate than themselves, and, by giving instruction to those who defy the divine will, to lead them into their upright fellowship; (3) to devise ways of realizing genuine happiness and of attaining spiritual power. Eight chief virtues are enjoined on the members of the society, viz. fortitude—to be patient in persecution; assiduity—to be able to bring great undertakings to a successful consummation; loyalty and affection—to make moral

¹ Quoted by Holtom, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

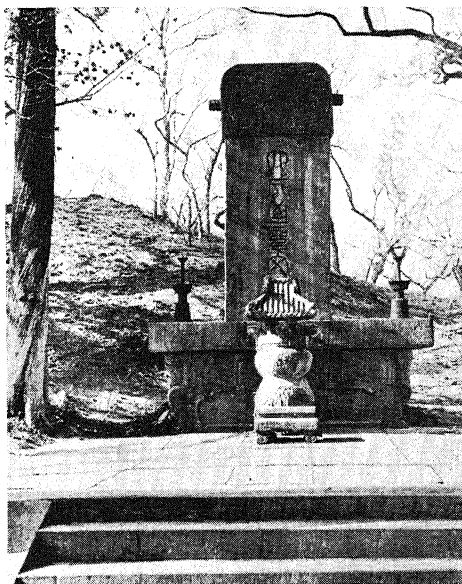
obligations and justice clear; peace and joy—to realize the mutual affection of husband and wife, the peace of the home and the prosperity of offspring; the healing of sickness—to promote free medical service and the progress of medicine; the commonweal—to be diligent in activities for the public welfare, such as the extermination of noxious insects and the opening of roads; secret charity—to show benevolence in helping the needy; and spiritual education—to promote education and religion.¹

So much for the sects that are supposed to enshrine the essentials of Shinto in all their original power and purity. The other ten sects need not detain us, since they add little to the ethical conceptions and the moral behaviour already outlined, although in each there is some special feature, as belief in faith-healing, worship in mountain shrines, and the practice of a ritual of purification. They are completely nationalist in their ideology, expressing unstinted and unswerving devotion to the Imperial Family, the supremely favoured children of the gods; and some equate patriotism with world dominion.

But in the light of the subjection imposed on Japanese women as a sex, it is interesting and important to note that one of the sects owes its origin to a woman. This is Tenri Kyo, which was founded by Mrs. Nakayama—her personal name was Miki—who was born in 1798; married at the age of twelve, and in due course gave birth to six children; became “possessed” by the god Tenri in 1838; and henceforth lived in self-imposed poverty and frequent persecution until she died, at nearly ninety, in 1887. The sect she had founded was legally incorporated in the next year; and when the last census was taken, in 1937, it was the most numerous of all the thirteen sects, with considerably more than four million members.

From time to time Mrs. Nakayama received revelations that have been written down to form the sacred scriptures of the sect. The first great principle is universal salvation—“to save those who are sick and those who are in trouble, those who are in mental anguish and those who are in pain; to save mankind from all distress and suffering, from all sickness and misfortune, and thereby to make man over anew and lead him into a life of joy”; and this may be attained when the eight “dusts” that make the heart of man unclean are swept away. These “dusts”—the doctrine is eminently fitted to have proceeded from a careful housewife—are: inordinate desire or covetousness, stinginess, misdirected love, hatred, spite

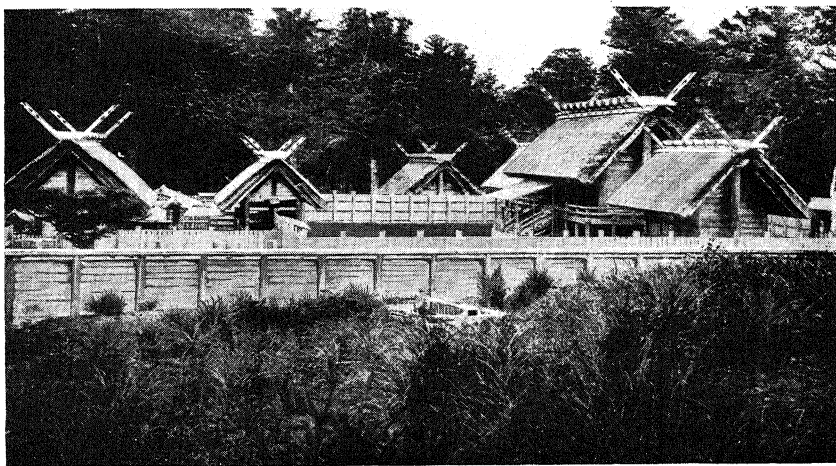
¹ Holtom, *op. cit.*, p. 203.



THE TOMB OF CONFUCIUS



YOUNG TIBETAN MONK
WITH A PRAYER-WHEEL



ISE, HOLIEST SHRINE OF SHINTO

These unpretentious huts are the Grand Imperial Shrine of the Sun-Goddess Amaterasu, divine ancestress of the royal house of Japan.

or revenge, anger, pride, and selfishness. The spring-cleaning finished, man's soul and body are re-established in their normal relationship with the life-giving, healing spirit of the Universe.

At the 1937 census the number of adherents of the Shinto sects was returned as rather more than seventeen millions: this out of a total population of nearly seventy millions, most of whom were State Shintoists, even though they were Buddhists, etc., as well. The growth of the sects in recent times has been phenomenal, and Dr. Holtom has found their progress an encouraging sign.

At its best, he writes, their ethical content "is as fine as the nobility of universal human nature itself. Their emphasis on sincerity builds foundations as indispensable to permanent social good as does Buddhist compassion or Christian love. Their doctrine of purification, beginning in a primitive, external cleansing from ceremonial defilement, and ending in the expulsion of all negative and unsocial attitudes and the attainment of inner peace and unselfish mutuality, ultimately reaches the true heights of genuine personal and social religion."¹

¹ Holtom, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

The Golden Rule

Confucianism

What you don't want done to yourself, don't do to others.

—SIXTH CENTURY B.C.

Buddhism

Hurt not others with that which pains thyself.

—FIFTH CENTURY B.C.

Jainism

In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self, and should therefore refrain from inflicting upon others such injury as would appear undesirable to us if inflicted upon ourselves.

—FIFTH CENTURY B.C.

Zoroastrianism

Do not do unto others all that which is not well for oneself.

—FIFTH CENTURY B.C.

Classical Paganism

May I do to others as I would that they should do unto me.

Plato—FOURTH CENTURY B.C.

Hinduism

Do naught to others which if done to thee would cause thee pain.

Mahabharata—THIRD CENTURY B.C.

Judaism

What is hateful to yourself, don't do to your fellow man.

Rabbi Hillel—FIRST CENTURY B.C.

Christianity

Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.

Jesus of Nazareth—FIRST CENTURY A.D.

Sikhism

Treat others as thou wouldst be treated thyself.

—SIXTEENTH CENTURY A.D.

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